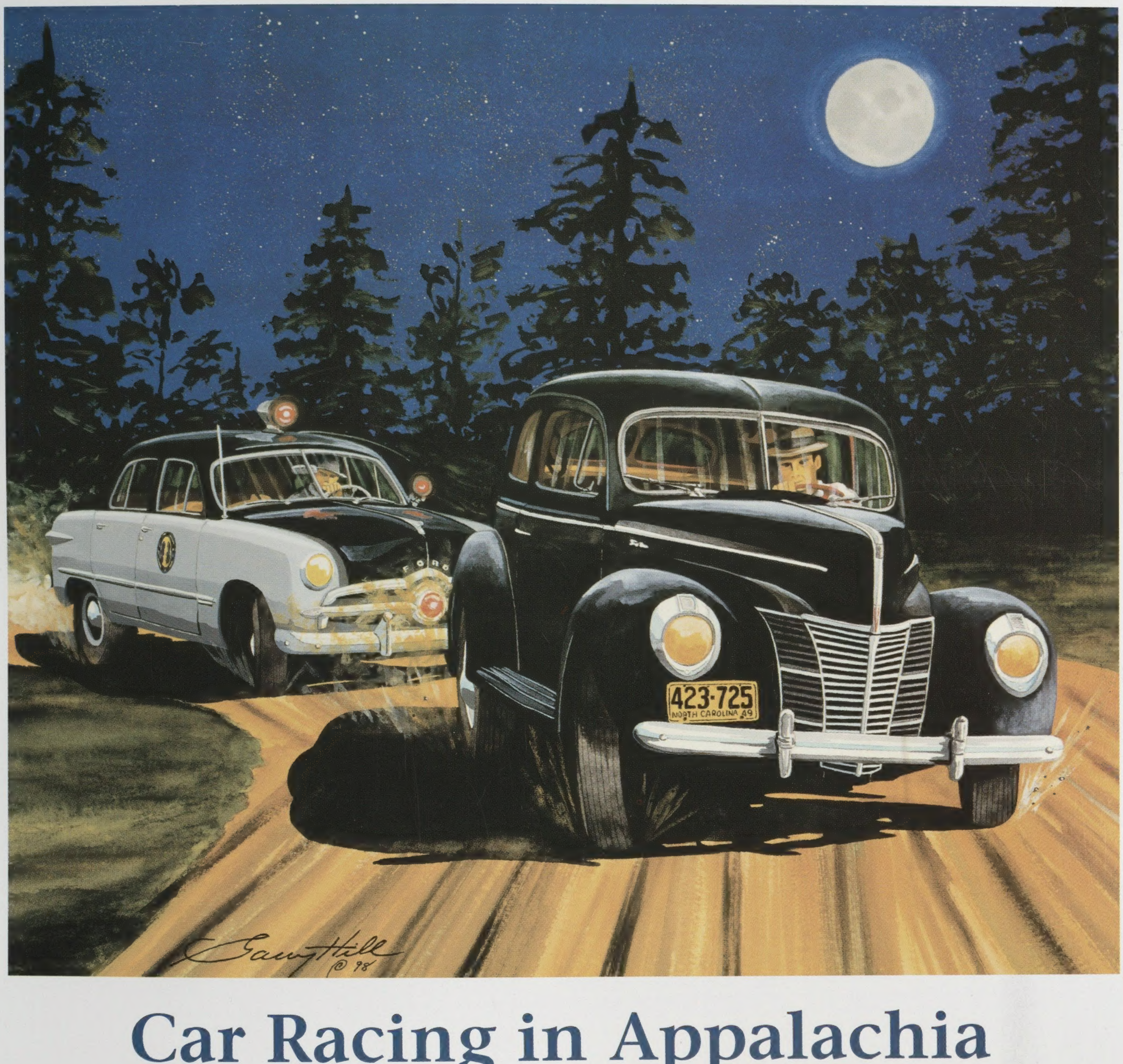
Economic Boosts and Busts • Drivers as Heroes • Speedways to Heaven • Memory Lanes

NOW & THEN

THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

THE CENTER FOR APPALACHIAN STUDIES AND SERVICES • EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
Volume 21, Number 2
Fall 2005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Car Racing in Appalachia

From 'Shine to Shrines

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ON THE WIRE TO WIRED Appalachia's early days of auto racing was a drive-in, dirt-track affair, as Don Hunter's portrait of a race at the Asheville-Weaverville Speedway in the early 1950s shows. Early spectators would often stand or sit right at the fence, bring your own seating. Almost five decades later, at larger venues at least, fans must view from more of a distance. But some tune in on-air and even online from the stands to get the various inside scoops. This tuned-in, new millennium crowd is at Bristol Motor Speedway.

ON THE COVER The cover image, "Moonshine," is a representation of an original painting and limited-edition print series by motorsports artist Garry Hill. It depicts racing legend Junior Johnson in his 1940 Ford moonshine hauler being pursued by the law. For more about this and other works by Garry Hill, visit www.garryhill.com, or call 1-800-847-0043 to request a free brochure. Cover layout by ETSU University Press.

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Special thanks to:
Kevin Triplett and Sharyn McCrumb

You got a fast car/But is it fast enough so we can fly away/We gotta make a decision/We leave tonight or live and die this way

—from Tracy Chapman's "Fast Car"

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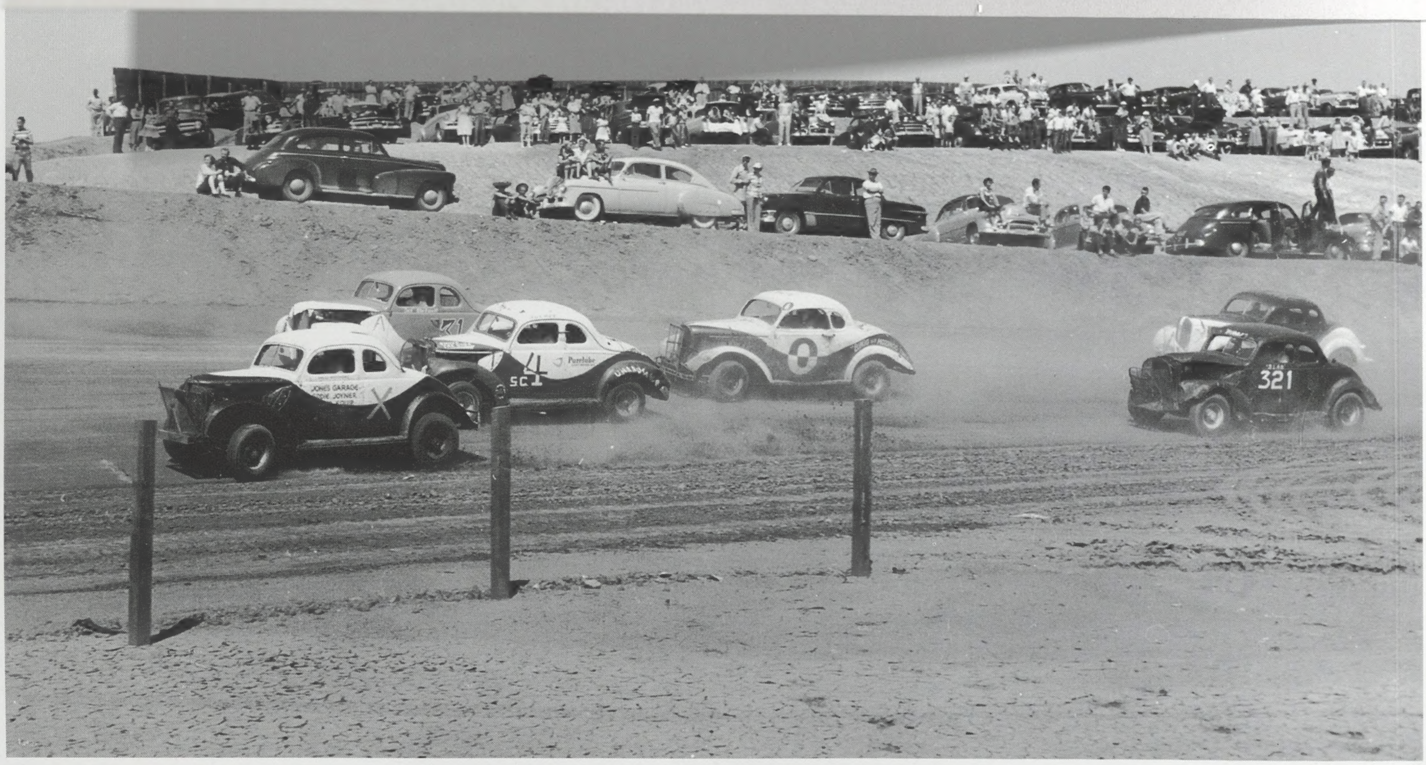

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To Roads Less Traveled

Working on an issue about car racing is one of the more unlikely affiliations for me. Ask anyone, speeding cars is NOT my thing. My children amuse their friends and work colleagues with stories about how *long* my latest trip to come visit them has taken. I usually take the roads less traveled by, routes that meander enough that you feel you've actually been somewhere except on a long, greenery-lined corridor of pavement with hundreds of other vehicles hurrying to wherever.

And I almost never take those roads at speeds in excess of the posted limits. Getting there fast is not generally my main reason for traveling. Even if it were, my trusty, four-cylinder Honda CRV, which had no trouble navigating the "hills" of Oklahoma, has a bit of a challenge climbing real hills and the mountains in Colorado, the Carolinas, and Virginia, where I most often drive these days. And if I want to maneuver *those* hills/mountains and run the air conditioner, well… you sure aren't traveling at world-class speeds, let me tell you.

I got my first — and only — speeding ticket in October 2000, after more than three decades of driving. I was on my way to visit my older daughter, who at the time lived near Memphis. She thought I was joking when I told her. The exchange went something like this:

"So, how was your trip, Ma?"

"Good except for a speeding ticket in Hardin County, Tenn."

"Oh, yeah, sure."

"No, really, I got a ticket — going uphill."

"Sure you did, Mom."

"I did. I was making a run for it to get by a logging truck while he was in the slow-vehicle lane."

Her skepticism began to wear away but not completely until I dug into my briefcase and produced said ticket.

She was amused when I compared following the log truck to following a load of carcasses, spiky limbs waving for help — or menacingly awaiting opportunity to impale. She laughed out loud when I told her that the patrolman who stopped me apologized after hearing my reply to his question of when I had gotten my last ticket: This is a first. My spotless record certainly didn't keep him from writing out the ticket, though. I had been electronically recorded and all, he said.

As I recall, it cost me about 80 bucks — amortized over 40 plus years of driving now, not so bad, I guess. Still, on the trip back home to Western North Carolina, I investigated the speed postings and that patrolman's little hideaway. It was alongside the road behind a low-hanging tree branch; he had stopped me five miles from the closest speed limit posting. "Can we say Speed Trap, boys and girls?" I asked in my best Mr. Rogers imitation.

Anyway, you get the idea. Speed and racing cars… not my thing. My older sister, now that's another story. She is — or was in her younger days — an auto demon. One of my scariest recollections is of being in the car with her near the Osage River in the Missouri Ozarks on our way to her in-laws' house. It had rained fiercely and the creeks and rivers had flooded. There was a slightly mounded road with two wheel tracks and water all around. Good sense said turn back, even to me, about 11 or 12 at the time. My sister would hear nothing of that. On she went, fast as she could, as three of us kids huddled down in the back seat and covered our eyes.

This is the same woman whose husband fixed up an old car to drive in the jalopy races at a dirt track in Riverside, Mo. He never had much luck at the races, so my sister decided she would try her hand and driving nerve in the powder puff derby. She ran in one race — talked about next week's. My brother-in-law sold that jalopy faster than he ever drove it on the track.

We at *Now & Then* came to this issue on Car Racing in Appalachia because it is so much a part of life in the region — whether speed and cars are your thing or not. I found myself enjoying the reminiscences, fascinated in learning about the economic impact and the fan loyalty, appreciative of seeing that creative educators are using kids' interest in NASCAR as a way to motivate them to math, science, and design. Finding a subculture of people who are caught up in and truly care about the topic at hand — be it volunteer firefighting, soccer, quilting, or speeding automobiles — has always interested me.

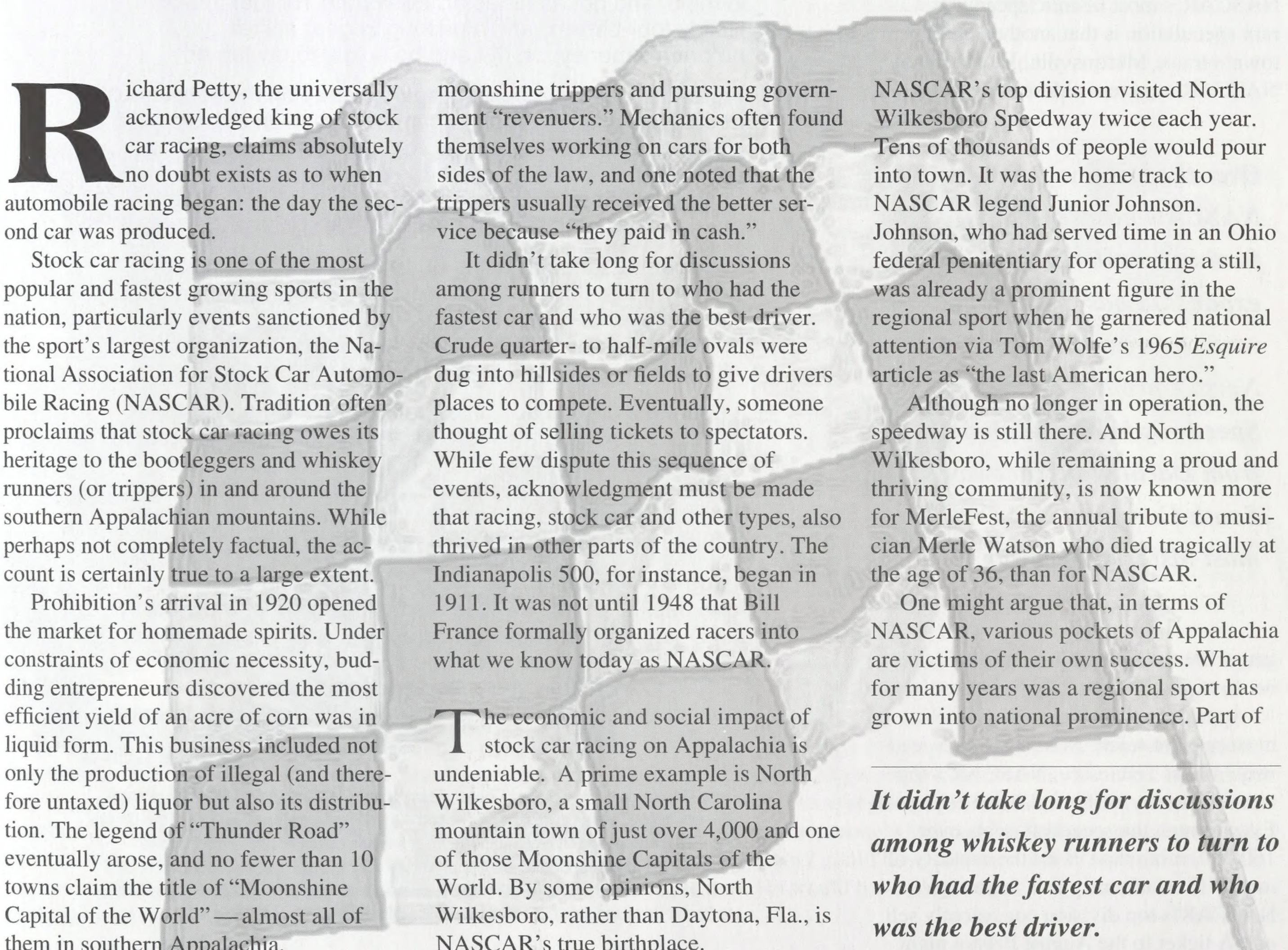
In this issue people share stories about being touched by greatness, or the raw danger of speed. For one, the touch is from a Daytona 500 winner; for another, a dad driving dirt track decades ago. This issue makes us mindful that there is a wondrous freedom of the road, of speed, that keeps us hurling ourselves forward along the path ahead. (We just need to be careful of those speed traps.)

— Norma Wilson, Guest Editor

Car Racing in Appalachia: A Historical and Cultural View

by Don Good

From moonshiners' bragging rights to a multibillion-dollar industry, car racing's roots run deep in the region.



Richard Petty, the universally acknowledged king of stock car racing, claims absolutely no doubt exists as to when automobile racing began: the day the second car was produced.

Stock car racing is one of the most popular and fastest growing sports in the nation, particularly events sanctioned by the sport's largest organization, the National Association for Stock Car Automobile Racing (NASCAR). Tradition often proclaims that stock car racing owes its heritage to the bootleggers and whiskey runners (or trippers) in and around the southern Appalachian mountains. While perhaps not completely factual, the account is certainly true to a large extent.

Prohibition's arrival in 1920 opened the market for homemade spirits. Under constraints of economic necessity, budding entrepreneurs discovered the most efficient yield of an acre of corn was in liquid form. This business included not only the production of illegal (and therefore untaxed) liquor but also its distribution. The legend of "Thunder Road" eventually arose, and no fewer than 10 towns claim the title of "Moonshine Capital of the World"—almost all of them in southern Appalachia.

Soon, the chase was on between the moonshine trippers and pursuing government "revenuers." Mechanics often found themselves working on cars for both sides of the law, and one noted that the trippers usually received the better service because "they paid in cash."

It didn't take long for discussions among runners to turn to who had the fastest car and who was the best driver. Crude quarter- to half-mile ovals were dug into hillsides or fields to give drivers places to compete. Eventually, someone thought of selling tickets to spectators. While few dispute this sequence of events, acknowledgment must be made that racing, stock car and other types, also thrived in other parts of the country. The Indianapolis 500, for instance, began in 1911. It was not until 1948 that Bill France formally organized racers into what we know today as NASCAR.

The economic and social impact of stock car racing on Appalachia is undeniable. A prime example is North Wilkesboro, a small North Carolina mountain town of just over 4,000 and one of those Moonshine Capitals of the World. By some opinions, North Wilkesboro, rather than Daytona, Fla., is NASCAR's true birthplace.

For almost 50 years, until 1996, NASCAR's top division visited North Wilkesboro Speedway twice each year. Tens of thousands of people would pour into town. It was the home track to NASCAR legend Junior Johnson. Johnson, who had served time in an Ohio federal penitentiary for operating a still, was already a prominent figure in the regional sport when he garnered national attention via Tom Wolfe's 1965 *Esquire* article as "the last American hero."

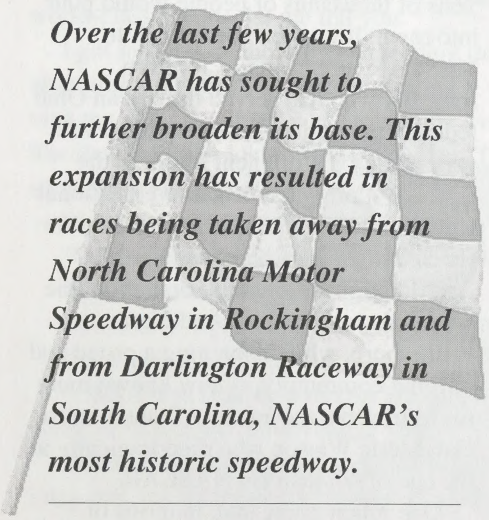
Although no longer in operation, the speedway is still there. And North Wilkesboro, while remaining a proud and thriving community, is now known more for MerleFest, the annual tribute to musician Merle Watson who died tragically at the age of 36, than for NASCAR.

One might argue that, in terms of NASCAR, various pockets of Appalachia are victims of their own success. What for many years was a regional sport has grown into national prominence. Part of

It didn't take long for discussions among whiskey runners to turn to who had the fastest car and who was the best driver.

the aftermath of the ban on television tobacco advertising was the sponsorship of NASCAR's top division by R.J. Reynolds Tobacco in 1971. In 1972, all races less than 250 miles in length were culled from the schedule. Other cities in Appalachia formerly hosting NASCAR's top drivers include Birmingham and Huntsville, Ala.; Corbin, Ky.; Asheville, N.C.; Greeneville and Spartanburg, S.C.; Chattanooga, Kingsport, Maryville, and Newport, Tenn.; and Huntington, W.Va.

Over the last few years, NASCAR has sought to further broaden its base. Today finds multi*billion* dollar television contracts and relatively new tracks in such urban areas as Chicago, Kansas City, Las Vegas, and Dallas/Fort Worth. This expansion has resulted in races being taken away from North Carolina Motor Speedway in Rockingham and from Darlington Raceway in South Carolina, NASCAR's most historic speedway. Current speculation is that another small town's track, Martinsville, Va., home of NASCAR's current oldest track, is in danger of being removed from the schedule because it is in a sparsely populated area.



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Appalachia does boast NASCAR's most popular track: Bristol Motor Speedway in East Tennessee. NASCAR's top two divisions visit Bristol twice each year. Even though the speedway seats over 160,000, more than twice the capacity of most NFL stadiums, races featuring NASCAR's top division consistently sell out. A ticket to the August Bristol night race is said to be the "toughest ticket in NASCAR"—if not all of sports. Obviously, the economic and social impact on the city and surrounding area is enormous.

Contrary to popular misconception, modern stock car racing is a far cry from being a sport for uneducated, toothless men in overalls. Grandstands are filled with people from the working class to professionals, and an estimated 40 percent of fans are female. Ticket prices frequently exceed $100. Stock car racing has become a highly technical field, employing not only skilled drivers but also educated engineers and technicians. And the region is finding its place in educating those specialists.

Stock car racing's evolution has mirrored that of Appalachia's in many ways. While one does not have as many options as in the past to see NASCAR's top level in action in this region, countless communities continue to have tracks holding smaller, non-NASCAR sanctioned events. Automobile racing of all types and at all levels has a rich and proud heritage—one that is deeply interwoven into the overall fabric of Appalachia.

Don Good, a native of North Carolina, currently resides in Williamsburg, Ky., where he is vice president for academic affairs and professor of education and mathematics at the University of the Cumberlands. He saw his first race in 1964 and has been a racing enthusiast ever since.

Detroit Muscle

I cranked it by sparking two ignition wires together
and the engine rumbled like a death foretold.
Billy Thatcher rebuilt it with Knoxville Motor Speedway
in mind, and got as far as an Edelbrock Torquer intake,
Holley four-barrels, and a pistol-grip gear shifter
before his money ran out and he sold it to my father.

For a full year I had passed it twice a day on the school bus,
marking its progress from a primered shell on cinderblocks
beside Thatcher's garage, to something like a balled fist
on wheels, a '69 Rally Sport, the very spirit of Detroit labor.
I had glued together its exact replica a few years before
and felt like I had answered a call sitting behind the wheel.

We spent a summer tuning up the 350 until it hummed,
and my uncle painted it the blue of a thunderstorm at dusk.
The car sounded like lightning striking when I pulled
onto the highway—it could lay streaks on the blacktop
all through first gear and catch it again hitting second.

I opened it up one day on a gravel road in Sharps Chapel,
windows down, "Statesboro Blues" blasting from the stereo,
and I lost it—the front tire slipped the road and I went
spinning, one ditch swallowed me up and spit me straight
into the other and I landed upside down in a tobacco field,
wondering where the road went and why I wasn't on it.

I dug my way out the passenger window and stood watching
one back tire turn slowly to a stop, listening for a minute
as Duane Allman's guitar soared through the end of the song.
A wall of dust settled back into the grass and my legs
began to tremble as I climbed back up to the road,
hoping I might catch a ride for part of the long walk home.

—**Jesse Graves**

Jesse Graves grew up in Sharps Chapel, Tenn., a small farming community north of Knoxville, where his German ancestors first settled in the 1790s. He studied English at the University of Tennessee, and he received a master of fine arts degree in poetry from Cornell University. He taught at Cornell and the University of New Orleans and now is at work on a Ph.D. in the creative writing program at UT, where he won the 2004 John C. Hodges Graduate Poetry Prize and the 2005 James Agee Prize for Poetry.

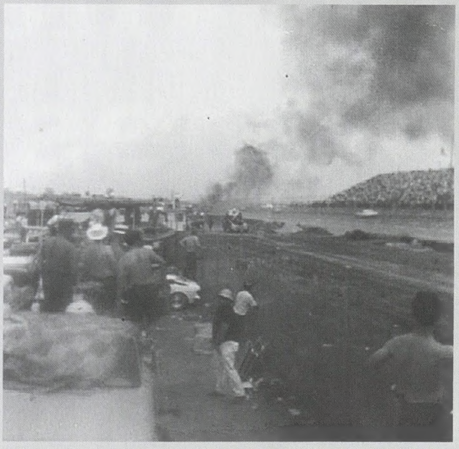
Car Racing: A Personal Perspective

I've been attending races for more than 40 years. I still manage to attend two or three Nextel Cup races each year along with several others at lower levels. But I have to admit that the first thing I thought of in reflecting on Car Racing in Appalachia was my many trips to races with my father. Our family would camp in the infield and watch the races from there.

When I got a bit older, my mom got less interested so my father would take me along with some of his drinking buddies. I would be the only sober one while we played poker, so I usually won all the money. They were happy; I was happy; a good time was had by all.

Courtesy of Don Good
TALLADEGA
Bud
CARSON-NEWMAN
EA SPORTS 500
WINNER
TALLADEGA

Don Good, with his daughter, Hannah Stuart, pose in victory lane with Dale Earnhardt Jr. at Talladega Speedway in October 2001. Good met Earnhardt Sr. once and saw him drive in three races. He says he never pulled for him but always respected him. "He drove a lot of the road to where stock car racing (and not just NASCAR) is today."



Smoke from the 1964 crash that led to the death of Edward Glenn "Fireball" Roberts Jr. could be seen for up to 10 miles from the Charlotte Motor Speedway.

I can still see myself as a 7-year-old boy, in May of 1964, so excited to be going to his first race. The trip from home in Hickory, N.C., to Charlotte Motor Speedway seemed much longer than the little more than an hour it took. I'd heard all about the exploits of the hottest driver on the circuit and couldn't wait to see Fireball in action. Our family camped out in the infield right inside turn two. As it turned out, I only saw Fireball run seven laps. What I most remember about the wreck was the thick black smoke coming from the end of the backstretch.

Not long ago, I came across a photograph that one of my parents took of that smoke stretching into the air. For almost 37 years, that was the most infamous accident in NASCAR history. I learned something else about that 1964 race fairly recently. I was reading in one of the NASCAR history/reference books and noticed that one of the drivers' names was Ralph Earnhardt.

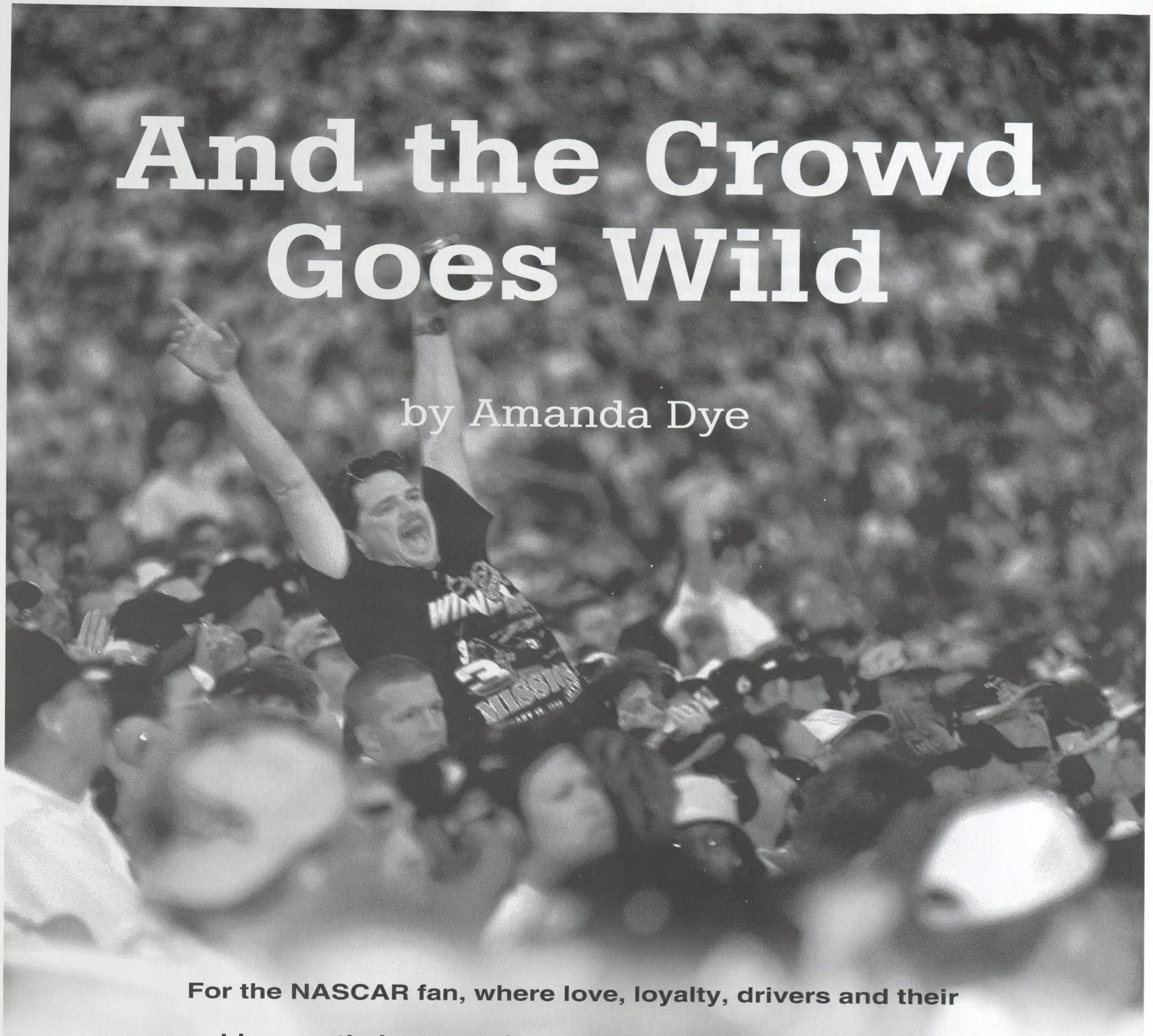
A few years ago, I was talking with Ned Jarrett (who was involved in the wreck) and told him that I was there and it was my first race. He seemed very sincere in telling me that he appreciated that I stayed with the sport. Having grown up in Hickory, I would frequent Hickory Speedway (which for several years was managed by Jarrett). The regulars included Harry Gant, Morgan Shepherd, Bob Pressley (Robert's dad), and the young kid of the previously mentioned Ralph.

I met Dale Earnhardt Sr. only once. I watched as he signed autograph after autograph. When it was my turn, I told him that I used to watch him at Hickory. He paused, and I could tell that he appreciated someone who wasn't a Johnny-come-lately fan. I wish I'd known I could have told him that I'd seen his daddy drive, too. He would have liked that.

—Don Good

And the Crowd Goes Wild

by Amanda Dye



Fresh Air Photo, www.freshairphoto.com

For the NASCAR fan, where love, loyalty, drivers and their sponsorships go, their money (and wardrobe color palette) often follow.

Growing up in southwest Virginia, I knew about NASCAR — at least enough to get by when conversations steered to race weekend in Bristol, Tenn., near where I grew up, or to queries about my favorite driver. (I would just give my mom's favorite — No. 3 — Dale Earnhardt). But during college, my perspective changed from a skeptic of the sport to an avid fan.

In my mass communications courses at Emory & Henry College, in Emory, Va., I sat next to Eric McClure, now No. 4 with Team McClure and Morgan-McClure Motorsports and a racer in the Nextel series. I listened to him and a few other classmates talk about their dreams of making it in NASCAR, heard Eric say the only reason he was in college was that his parents wanted him to get an education; his heart was on the race track.

Recent deaths of prominent racers and additional research have further opened my eyes to the draw of the sport and to its strong fan base with buying power, a language, and a dress code all their own. According to Nielsen Media Research, the 2004 television viewers per regular-season event was 8 million for the NASCAR Nextel Cup Series, compared to 1.5 million for the National Basketball Association and 1.3 million for major league baseball. NASCAR was second only to the National Football League in TV viewership last year.

Bristol Motor Speedway

On race day at Bristol Motor Speedway these days, there is room for 160,000 fans — and growing with new suites being added and stadium upgrades at the adjacent dragway.

The NASCAR industry estimates that licensing retail sales — that's those jackets, hats, mugs, miniature cars, key chains, and other logo ware — have grown by 250 percent from 1995 to 2004, with sales over $2 billion last year.

NASCAR is so hot and such a revenue producer that new market expansion has started outside its home region in the Southeast. NASCAR has never marketed specifically to the Southern market, according to Kevin Triplett, vice president for public affairs of the Bristol Motor Speedway (BMS) and Bristol Dragway. Rather, he says, the industry "took an opposite stance of expanding to markets outside the Southeast to broaden our reach and influence as a national sports entity, equivalent to the big stick-and-ball sports."

"People and corporations built these tracks in other parts of the country seeing how popular NASCAR was and how saturated the tracks of the Southeast were and hoping that would translate to a track in another part of the country where there may not be another track for a 300- or 400-mile radius."

"NASCAR is a business," my friend Eric McClure reminds me. "The sanctioning body has to do what is best for them to turn the most profit. The South is the backbone of race, but racing has developed into a marketing phenomenon."

Fans are spending anywhere from several hundred to several thousand dollars each year for tickets. The average ticket for a NASCAR race is $80 to $85 compared to an average professional football ticket at $52.95, basketball at $42.27 per seat, or baseball at $19.82. Then there is the money spent on racing merchandise and travel expenses to and from the race tracks. Also, fans are traveling farther as more tracks are built in the Northeast and West.

"NASCAR has 75 million fans, most of who are willing to travel and make a mini-vacation out of events," McClure says.

And some fans do go to extremes to get to the races. "The average NASCAR fan travels 200 miles to go to a race, spends $400 or $500 for the weekend's entertainment, and goes to four or five races a year," Jim Wright notes in his 2002 book, *Fixin'*

BRISTOL RACEWAY
UNOCAL 76
Kodak FILM
Bristol Motor Speedway

Crowded then, too, a pit's eye view of the stands at the April 10, 1988 Valleydale Meats 500 at BMS. Stadium capacity was about 50,000.

to Git. Wright himself, who subtitled the book *One Fan's Love Affair with NASCAR's Winston Cup,* averaged more than 600 miles of travel one way to get to races and dropped between $800 and $1,000 every race weekend. "When the season was done," he writes, "I had attended eight races and regretted not attending more."

Races get to you, and to your pocketbook. They can have a dramatic impact on the local economy through their spending at local restaurants, shops, hotels, and grocery stores. Even if you live near a race track, attending requires economic loyalty. My aunt and uncle used to be some of the luckier fans because they would win free tickets to the Bristol race from a local radio station each year. Nothing beats being Lucky Caller No. 8 or 24 or whatever, depending on the station's driver pick for the race.

Fresh Air Photo, www.freshairphoto.com

Getting close to the action has long been the appeal of car racing in Appalachia, whether it was neighboring farmers in the early days or the youth of today like these at BMS. NASCAR Brand Tracker in 2001 estimated 40 percent of its fan base was families with kids under 18.

Loyal fans wear the numbers and colors of their favorite drivers proudly—even fiercely. According to NASCAR Brand and Consumer Marketing, fans are three times more likely to try to purchase NASCAR sponsors' products and services than non-fans. "The public display of loyalty extends to seat cushions, coolers, and race bags, all of which may also sport the names, numbers, colors, logos, or other insignia of drivers, teams, races, tracks, sponsors, or sanctioning organizations," Wright notes.

Lynn Jackley, another friend from Emory & Henry, took a job a few years ago in Mooresville, N.C., and learned immediately the essentials of survival in NASCAR country—supporting your driver by decorating your vehicle with stickers and flags before a race. Though Lynn knew very little about NASCAR, her co-workers educated her about the numbers, colors, and stories behind many popular drivers. It was as much a part of the job orientation as the code to the photocopier.

Avid fans also make the connection between their racer's sponsors and consumer purchases. Companies use racing regalia as free advertising for their products, "A Tony Stewart fan is, ipso facto, a walking advertisement for Home Depot; a Terry Labonte fan is a virtual Kellogg's Corn Flakes billboard," Jim Wright observes. Ben Trout, director of advertising and promotions for BMS and Bristol Dragway, says that the loyalty among NASCAR fans to support their racers and their products does not exist in other sports. "If their racer sells Tide detergent, then they are buying Tide," Trout notes.

My own mom made a concerted effort to stop buying Pepsi when driver Jeff Gordon started endorsing the product. A loyal Earnhardt fan, she eventually gave up her personal boycott, though, because she preferred Pepsi to other sodas.

Bristol Motor Speedway

Special events also lure fans. These are getting up close and personal with John Schneider aka Bo and the General Lee at the second annual DukesFest this June at BMS. Rides in the notorius *Dukes of Hazzard* car benefited Special Olympics. Music, car stunts, and cast appearances completed the two-day event.

A driver since 2000, McClure says it is essential for even the most popular drivers not to lose sight of their strong fan base. "(Fans) follow it, love it, buy the tickets, wait sometimes for hours to see the drivers," he says. "It makes me feel good when I interact with them."

Those fans also connect by making civic commitments to NASCAR, their drivers, and the local communities near the race tracks. Last year, NASCAR sponsored a "NASCAR Day" in which people were asked to send $5 to the organization for sponsored charities and to wear their favorite NASCAR gear to work on Aug. 20. Thousands participated.

Each race track has a specific children's charity or other philanthropy that it partners with to help the local community. According to Triplett, more than $2 million has been reinvested into the community from their Christmas holiday Speedway in Lights and the York Ice Skating rink at BMS.

Drivers, too, have their own favorite causes. McClure frequently participates in Racing 4 Literacy and has helped with 4-H, Cub Scouts, and other track-sponsored events. The website www.thatsracin.com has a separate section that chronicles the drivers and their foundations and the dozens of charitable groups they support. It is part of the community feel NASCAR racing fosters.

A recent question is how to maintain the Southern legacy in NASCAR as the industry has started to shift to new markets and focus on larger endorsements. That manifests itself in the debate about the location of the NASCAR Hall of Fame. Four of the five sites are in the Southeast with Charlotte and Daytona lobbying hard given their historic ties to stock car beginnings. It's also present in the traditional Southern values and traits associated with the sport — music, religion, and patriotism. NASCAR has partnered with Country Music Television (CMT) to bring big-name acts to play at several tracks. A prayer and the national anthem open every race day. There is a ministry outreach (see related story, page 24). The honor of dropping the race's starting flag goes to prominent Southern politicians, musicians, and professional athletes.

At the heart of it all, though, are those 17 million fans who attend the NASCAR races each year, who armor themselves in logo gear, dig their campers out of muddy fields, wait in lines for hours to get autographs, and, if they are lucky Cup fans, to win FOX Network's beloved Fan of the Week Award, so all viewers know that NASCAR fans have the most spirit. N&T

Andrew J. Baker

A view of the camper village at Martinsville (Va.) Speedway when Nextel fans came this April for the Advance Auto Parts 500.

"The average NASCAR fan travels 200 miles to go to a race, spends $400 or $500 for the weekend's entertainment, and goes to four or five races a year."

***— Jim Wright in* Fixin' to Git**

Amanda Dye is program coordinator for the Center for Regional Strategies at Virginia Tech and a lifelong resident of southwest Virginia. Her research interests are Appalachian culture, service-learning, and organizational communication. She began research for this piece in an Appalachia in the Media course taught by Grace Edwards at Radford University in Radford, Va.

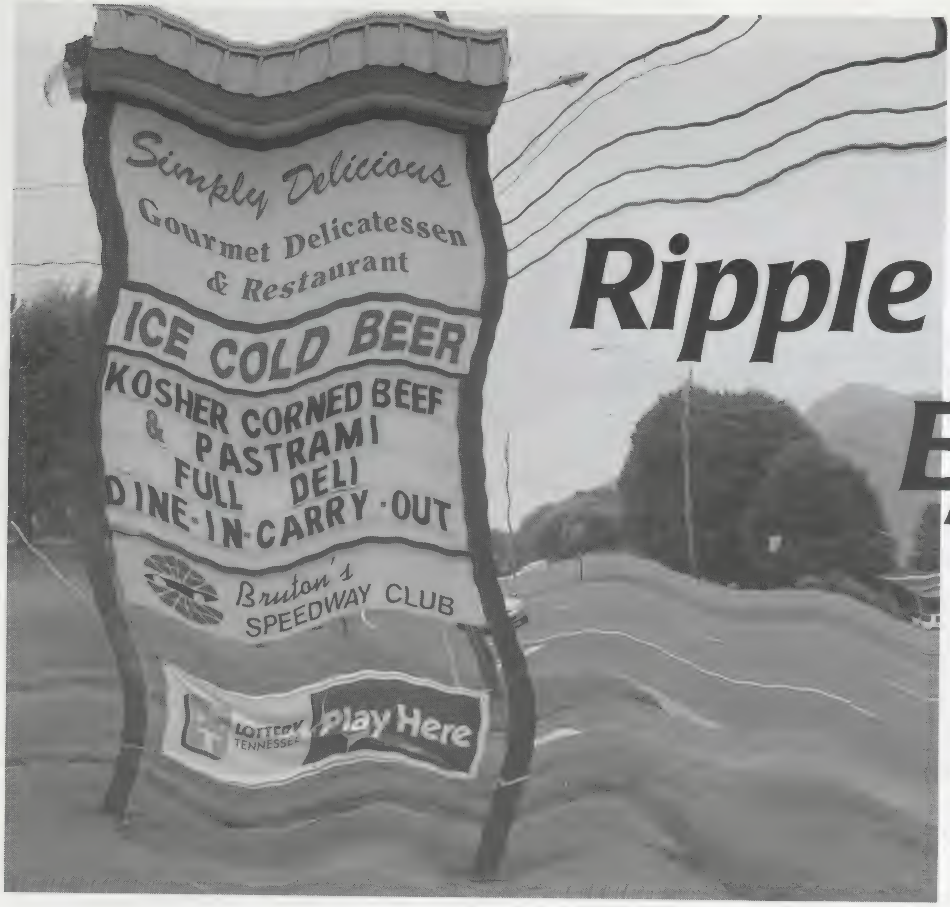
Talkin' the Talk

True NASCAR fans talk a language all their own; the lingo is part of the subculture. Here are a few examples (with a bow to Jim Wright and *Fixin' to Git):*

- Jeff Gordon was the fastest qualifier and started the race inside the front row ("pole-sat").
- It was a hard fought battle: cars were banging into one another ("they traded paint") and there were frequent yellow flags ("cow shins").
- Dale Earnhardt was right on Gordon's tail for much of the race ("a mirror full of Dale Earnhardt on his right spoiler"), but Gordon drove with skill and determination ("drove the tars off his Chevy"), emerged victorious ("got the checkered"), and, of course, expressed his post-race gratitude to all the sponsors who made it all possible.

Some of the terminology has strong roots in Appalachian dialect ("tars" for tires) and speech patterns. If you find yourself in need of a translation, check out the glossary at www.nascar.com.

—A.D.



Ripple Effects

by Greg Peters

The economic impact of a speedway spills over — in some unexpected ways and places.

Aside from the two NASCAR Nextel Cup races, Bristol Motor Speedway (BMS) hosts many events including the annual Speedway in Lights, powered by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and National Hot Rod Association drag races. In 2003 the speedway attracted more than 640,000 fans and calculated an economic benefit of almost $1.8 billion to the region.

Whether for a camping site, gasoline, food, or ice, local establishments reap revenue from avid race fans. One of these is the Simply Delicious Gourmet Delicatessen and Restaurant, an eatery less than a half mile from the track. When you enter the parking lot one of the first sights is a sign referring to Bruton's Speedway Club — a tip of the hat to the speedway's owner, Charlotte, N.C., businessman Bruton Smith.

"It started out as a joke, but any type of affiliation with Bristol Motor Speedway is great, and that sign is never coming down," says the deli's owner, Larry Slipek. He opened the business 13 years ago after moving from Michigan, but when he started, things were less than great. "When we first came, the races actually hurt our business," Slipek says. "We were not known and when race time came around, our regular customers would stay away. In 1996 (the year Smith bought the facility) things started turning around, and it just gets better every year."

The impact isn't just during race weekends. Anyone who has driven by the racetrack over the past nine years has been witness to the massive construction efforts that have taken place — additions that have included new seating, luxury boxes, and other amenities. A big part of that work has fallen on the shoulders of Baker's Construction Services.

When Chad Baker returned home from college, he had the opportunity to pursue several careers but decided on the construction business. His first big opportunity came when Smith bought the track from Larry Carrier, who was one of the builders

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Some Bristol Motor Speedway Milestones

from www.bristolmotorspeedway.com

1960 Construction begins at Bristol International Speedway.
July 30, 1961 First race held.
Fall 1969 Track reshaped and re-measured to a .533-mile oval with 36-degree banks.
Aug. 26, 1978 First night race held.
April 1, 1979 Dale Earnhardt wins first career Winston Cup race.
April 6, 1986 Rusty Wallace wins first career Winston Cup race.
Aug. 25, 1990 Ernie Irvan wins first career Winston Cup race.
Aug. 29, 1992 Bristol becomes the first speedway with an all-concrete track surface to host a Winston Cup event; Darrell Waltrip grabs his final Bristol win, his 12th on "The World's Fastest Half-Mile."
Jan. 22, 1996 Bruton Smith, CEO of Speedway Motorsports Inc., purchases BMS from Larry Carrier for $26 million.

and original owners of the speedway when it was constructed in the early 1960s.

In April 1996, Baker and his father, W.C. Baker Jr., were called to the racetrack for a meeting with Smith and General Manager Jeff Byrd. "My father and I met with Mr. Smith and Jeff Byrd about problems they needed fast tracked," Chad Baker recalls. "They asked us if we could move 285,000 yards of rock in 90 days with a $2,500 dollar a day penalty. We said double the penalty to $5,000 and every day we get done early you pay us. We ended up moving over 650,000 yards and were still done in 90 days."

From that first job, the company has grown from eight pieces of equipment to 137, the number of employees has jumped from eight to 85, and they've moved more than 3.2 million cubic yards of material for BMS. "BMS was our first big job. They have been such an influence on our business," said Baker. "They've always given us good recommendations, and we try to go the extra mile just like they do. We've been there at the track right up to the last minute before race time dumping rock or what was needed. It's been a great relationship." The work with BMS also helped the company secure jobs preparing sites for Bristol's new Wal-Mart and Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouses, as well as several Food City Supermarkets.

BRISTOL
VA
TN
MOTOR SPEEDWAY
FANTASY IN LIGHTS

Bristol Motor Speedway

LIGHTING THE WAY **Local businesses haven't been the only beneficiaries of Bristol Motor Speedway. In 1996, Bruton Smith established Bristol Speedway Children's Charities to help children in the surrounding area. There's a chapter of the charity at all six facilities owned by Smith's Speedway Motorsports. In eight years the charity has distributed more than $2 million to nonprofit organizations in both Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia. The biggest source of the funding is the Speedway in Lights, powered by TVA. The annual holiday light display incorporates more than 1.5 million lights and 100 different displays.**

It takes a lot to meet the demands of 160,000 race fans who want to come to Bristol Motor Speedway for the week — sometimes more than the 70 full-time employees at BMS can handle by themselves. One young local entrepreneur was quick to realize the speedway's need for a good support team and started his own business, marketing it to that need. William Barrett actually began working for the track when he was 16 as a general laborer. After two years, he began contracting out to the track for small jobs. "I started contracting out so that I could be on my own time," he says. "It started out as pressure washing and then grew to events at the drag strip."

From there, Can Do Enterprises was born. At any time the number of employees can range from one to 150. The company performs any task needed from trash pickup to taking care of the restrooms. "Most of my business is at the speedway, but I'm trying to expand out of state," Barrett says. "I've done some small things at other tracks like Daytona, Atlanta, and Richmond, but I hope to grow and maintain my relationship with Bristol."

If you think traffic and parking are problems, try being responsible for cleaning up after thousands of race fans. "On Friday the race is over at around 11 p.m., and so we can't start cleanup until after 12. Then we have to be done by 9 a.m. It can be an overwhelming situation," Barrett says. "That's why the track needs specialized services."

"Can Do has been a great help to us here at Bristol Motor Speedway," notes Kevin Triplett, vice president for public affairs at the track. "Will's group not only does its job and does it well, they, several times, have pitched in and helped in other areas to get a job done or to meet the challenge of turning our facility around from hosting around 100,000 on one day, to getting it ready to greet around 160,000 less than 18 hours later."

Greg Peters is an intern at Bristol Motor Speedway and Bristol Dragway. He is working on a master's degree in sport management at East Tennessee State University.

May 28, 1996 Name becomes Bristol Motor Speedway.
Aug. 28, 1999 Dale Earnhardt's final Bristol win.
March 25, 2001 Elliott Sadler wins first career Winston Cup race.
March 2002 New pedestrian tunnel added, allowing infield access during on-track activities; new Victory Lane added atop a new infield building.
March 24, 2002 Kurt Busch wins first career Winston Cup race.
March 23, 2003 Record crowd of 160,000 attends BMS Food City 500.
2004 and 2005 Stadium expansion, including 35 new suites overlooking Turn 2.
June 7, 2005 Founder Larry Carrier dies.
July 11, 2005 *Sports Illustrated* names BMS Sharpie 500 a summer must-see event.

Picturing Bristol Speedway's History

by Michael Vaughn

In the summer of 2006, just prior to the fall race in Bristol, Jonesborough, Tenn., author Sonya Haskins will be releasing a book that takes a unique look at the Bristol Motor Speedway. While BMS has been the subject of dozens of books and thousands of articles since its inception on July 27, 1961, Haskins' approach is not the typical history of, or statistical analysis of the speedway. "90 percent of the focus of the book is early BMS photos," she says, "plus 10 percent contemporary photos." The goal is to give readers an understanding of the track's history as well as glimpses into the lives of people dedicated to making Bristol a motorsports mecca.

Haskins is perhaps an unlikely champion of the speedway. She is a wife, homemaker, mother of five children (Sarah, Micah, Christopher, Daniel, and Hannah, all of whom she home schools), and writer. A native of Soddy-Daisy, Tenn., she moved to Bristol to attend King College, where she graduated with a B.A. in English in 1992.

As she was faced with serious medical illnesses, it would have been easy to give up, complain, or focus on "why me?" "Attitude is a choice," she says. "Some people have a bad one. I have a good one. Life is finite. It is very important to me to work to achieve my goals and make the most of every day."

And that she has. Haskins has had hundreds of freelance pieces published including stories for *Writer's Digest, Guideposts for Teens,* and *Homeschooling Today.* She published two books this year through Arcadia Publishing's *Images of America Series: Johnson City* and *Jonesborough.* "I was able to develop a relationship with people in the community that otherwise I would not have gotten to know," Haskins says. "I literally went knocking on doors looking for families who had been 40 plus years in this area."

To gather photographs of the history and people of Johnson City and Jonesborough, Haskins relied on getting pictures from the residents themselves, rather than on archived library photos. As she went door to door, she talked with the people and recorded their recollections as she digitally scanned their photographs. In the same *Images* series, Haskins is working on *Bristol,* due out in October, and *Soddy-Daisy,* due out in spring 2006.

Haskins says she chose to write a book on Bristol Motor Speedway because she loves watching the race. Her love, however, is not the adrenaline rush of extreme record-setting speeds, loyalty to a particular driver, or thrill of bone-shattering crashes. "There is a start and a finish to the race," she explains. "Everything that I do goes over and over all day with no end. Moms will get that statement."

Courtesy of Sonya Haskins

Sonya Haskins

Long-time acquaintance David McGee, an announcer at the speedway, is collaborating with Haskins on the book. The two had a working relationship through the college newspaper when Haskins was attending King College. If you have excellent quality photos of BMS events from before 1990 that you would like to share, Haskins can be contacted at 423-913-8073 or by email at sonya_haskins@hotmail.com. N&T

Michael Vaughn, a Jonesborough, Tenn., resident, is a NASCAR fan and has written about NASCAR and the Bristol Motor Speedway for *Sports Talk* and several local publications.

The rise and fall of the North Wilkesboro Speedway

When the Thunder Dies

Winston Cup Series
Tyson Holly Farms

Don Good

by Andrew J. Baker

For 50 years the North Wilkesboro Speedway was part of the history of stock car racing. Then in 1996 the engines ceased roaring there. As the sport of NASCAR has become nationalized, small towns where much of the lore and origins of racing can be traced are being left behind. For North Wilkesboro, population 4,116, located in the foothills of the Brushy Mountains of northwestern North Carolina, it has been a hard adjustment. One 2001 estimate put Wilkes County's loss of revenue at $34 million a year.

Many racing historians, enthusiasts, and fans have called this speedway and town the "Cooperstown of NASCAR," tracing the sport back to moonshine, bootlegging, and "good ol' boys" with souped-up cars trying to outrun the authorities. The culminating race of NASCAR's inaugural season in 1949 was held at NWS. In a 1950 *American* magazine article the town was proclaimed "Moonshine Capital of America."

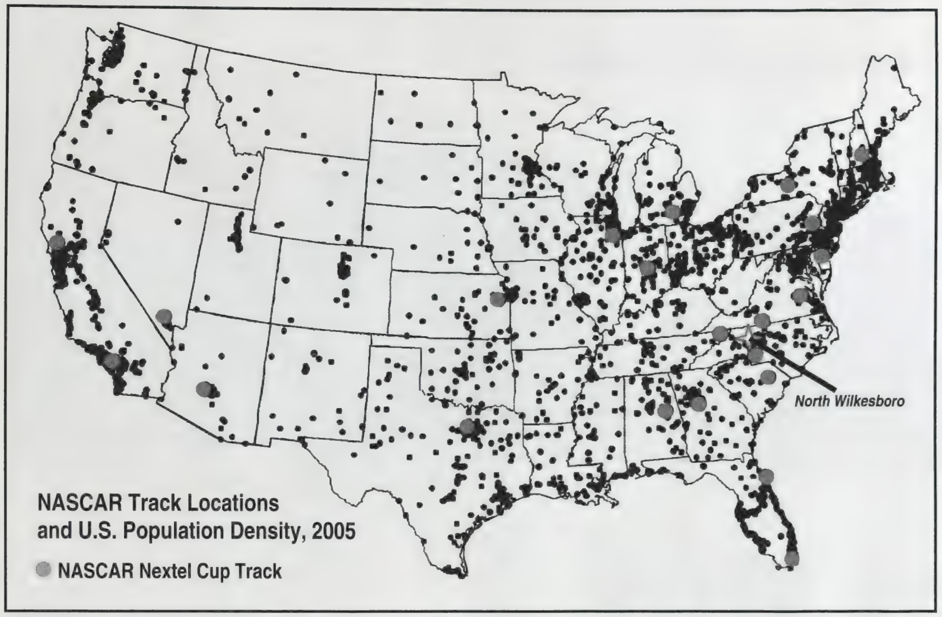
Race fans traveled long distances to watch races there, at one of the early, pioneering racing venues in NASCAR. In his piece, *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby,* Tom Wolfe describes this journey: "Ten o'clock Sunday morning in the hills of North Carolina, cars, miles of cars in every direction… all are going to the stock-car races." Another depiction of the scene: "… multitudes of cars, pickups, and recreational vehicles [wound] their way past cow pastures, chicken farms, and doublewide trailer homes."

To early fans of the sport, the track was notorious for being a great venue to watch races between legendary racers.

The speedway was renowned for its long traffic jams as cars came and left on two-lane, country roads, but to early fans of the sport, the track was more notorious for being a great venue to watch races between legendary racers.

Racing at the North Wilkesboro Speedway, where drivers reached 140 to 150 mph, was a much different experience from a race at the "super speedways" of Daytona, Indianapolis, or Talladega, where speeds topped 200 mph. The slower paced racing on smaller tracks, like NWS, yields a "whole lot of beating and banging" between dueling racecars, as often the only way to pass a car is by forcibly moving it out of the way.

The action in the grandstands was sometimes as eventful as the racing on the track. Richard Petty once commented, "There was a fight in the infield one time and it got so rough they had to throw a yellow flag [caution] so they could put one cat into a car, drive him around the track, and get him out of there." According to legend, fans would heave moonshine bottles at moving racecars they disliked. The concrete bleachers were so close to the track surface that fans could



Andrew J. Baker

Because of a perceived need to broaden NASCAR's fan and sponsor base race tracks have been moving to areas with higher density population. Baker predicts new tracks will be opening in the Pacific Northwest and near New York City.

see drivers' faces through the windshields and would go home with shreds of tire rubber in their hair.

Track owner Enoch Staley is credited with always having the fans' interests at heart, though his reluctance to raise ticket and concessions prices or charge spectators additional fees limited the capital available to make facility improvements. In 1996 an NWS race fan could purchase a ticket for $20, park and camp on site at no charge, and buy a bag of potato chips and pork rinds for $1.50. The cheapest "general admission" tickets to the 1995 Brickyard 400 at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway cost $45.

The town of North Wilkesboro was very welcoming as well. One fan remembered, "The people were friendly and the businesses were fair. Those good people knew that the race fans were the backbone of their economy, and we were treated like royalty, in the tradition of true Southern hospitality." Shops and streets were dressed up in welcome with checkered flags and signs greeting race fans.

"On a race weekend, you would find singalongs in the restaurants and tailgate parties in the motel parking lots," a Wilkes County resident noted in a recent survey. "More than likely, you'd meet some of the drivers there as well as other race fans." Another local race fan stated, "Evenings in North Wilkesboro were like one big party, and many of the drivers could be found at barbecues with the fans or sitting in the back of a pickup in the parking lot of a motel talking with anyone who walked up."

During the 1990s the track enjoyed record-breaking crowds, with 43,500 at the Tyson Holly Farms 400 in fall 1991 and 60,000 at the same event in fall 1995.

But on May 22, 1995, Enoch Staley died. Less than a month later, it was announced that Bruton Smith, the president of Speedway Motorsports, Inc., had purchased 50 percent of the 150 shares of the NWS from the Combs family, for a reported $6 million. In a tradition steeped with Wilkes County style, Jack Combs, a former county commissioner and one of NWS's four original investors, pulled a quart of moonshine out of a cabinet to toast the deal. During a meeting between Mike Staley (Enoch's son) and Smith, it was decided that the two owners would have equal representation.

On Jan. 1, 1996, it was announced that the 50 percent interest in North Wilkesboro Speedway owned by the heirs of Enoch Staley, including Mike Staley, had been sold to racetrack developer and promoter Bob Bahre, owner of the New Hampshire International Speedway. Mike Staley called selling the track "the only alternative" and a very painful but necessary decision in order to look after his own family's well being. Speculation immediately began that the North Wilkesboro Speedway would lose its two Winston Cup race dates.

Bahre and Smith bought North Wilkesboro in hopes of adding race dates at their other venues in 1997, the year in which Bill France established a limit of 32 Winston Cup races in any given year. There were already 32 races on the schedule, though, including a guaranteed race at the newly completed California Speedway. Thus, the only way to acquire a Winston Cup race was to buy a track that already had one or to move Cup races between tracks that promoters already owned.

North Wilkesboro was vulnerable. It is in a sparsely populated area and within 100 miles of two short-track venues, in Martinsville, Va., and Bristol, Tenn. Those tracks had kept up with the growth of NASCAR with seating for over 100,000 and bigger purses than North Wilkesboro, which could seat 60,000. Prior to the last race at North Wilkesboro Speedway, in fall 1996, driver Darrell Waltrip commented, "Our sponsors want us to reach more markets and not be so saturated in the Southeast. And the tracks with larger seating capacities are in these new markets, so it's a matter of progress that we move on."

> ***"The people were friendly and the businesses were fair. Those good people knew that the race fans were the backbone of their economy, and we were treated like royalty."***
>
> ***—a Wilkesboro Fan***

With the exception of a few test dates, the track has remained silent. Billboards around the track are fading and peeling away, as is the paint on the track's walls and on the sign that greets visitors at the entrance. Grass grows up through cracks in the racing surface and bushes through the Junior

Junior Johnson Grandstand

Don Good

Bushes grow through the bleachers at the Junior Johnson Grandstand while locals lament the loss of revenue from the demise of the North Wilkesboro speedway.

Johnson Grandstand bleachers. A windstorm in 1997 tore the roof off of the concession stands and restrooms outside the fourth turn.

Driving along Speedway Road, which connects the North Wilkesboro Speedway to the town of North Wilkesboro to the west, one notices the many service stations that are closed. In fact, on a recent trip no operating service stations were detected. These are modern looking buildings, suggesting their demise was linked to the end of racing at NWS.

Closer to the speedway is a go-kart track, closed since 1996. Located less than 200 yards from NWS, the go-kart track was a huge success during the family-oriented, race-weekend festivities. Now, it, too, has cracks in the track surface, tall grass growing over the walls, and rusted fencing.

Local businesses have closed down, while others continue to suffer from the economic loss. Eric Williams, owner of Williams Hotel in North Wilkesboro, responded in a Jan. 4, 1996, *Wilkes Journal-Patriot* article by saying, "It's a sad day for Wilkes County." Don Jarvis, a local restaurant and hotel owner, put the impact from the loss of the track and its two big races a year at "at least $15,000 per year" for his businesses. For Bill Harrold, manager of Lowe's Food, the supermarket closest to the speedway, it meant an estimated 10 percent reduction in profits.

Bob Ashley, president and owner of several convenience stores, noted, "We get a lot of traffic here 52 weeks a year from people driving over just to see the track."

In a recently completed survey of North Wilkesboro and Wilkes County residents, the local population still feels that North Wilkesboro is a "NASCAR" town since the speedway and its local racing heroes were integral in creating the largest spectator sport in the world. "It was a great NASCAR town… It's where it all originated… but people have lost their interest since the track closed."

Overwhelmingly, the local population agrees that the town's image has changed since racing ended at NWS. "This area, as well as a few others, helped NASCAR to develop into the national sport that it has become, and NASCAR, in search of the dollar, has abandoned its roots," one resident lamented. "North Wilkesboro had an image of a town that was the home of NASCAR races, race drivers, and Lowe's Companies, etc. Now it has really no particular image with the exception of an area in decline." In describing North Wilkesboro, another resident called it a "small-town that has become smaller as time goes by," adding that many businesses have left or folded and that tourism is mostly a thing of the past. Now it's "just another place on the way to the mountains," notes another. N&T

Andrew J. Baker is a graduate student in geography pursuing a Ph.D. at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. An avid motorsports fan, he has attended every Indianapolis 500 since 1988. This piece is based on his master's thesis, "When the Engines No Longer Roar: A Case Study of North Wilkesboro, N.C., and the North Wilkesboro Speedway."

Speed

Imagine Florida with no interstates
the century and Granddaddy
in their early twenties, done with war,
but ruined for all things soft or pretty.
He'd take from his garage — Harry's in Jacksonville —
junkers past repairing he'd stripped to stock
and meet at the beach to use that sand as track,
race with other vets against their hells.

My daddy, Speed, was nicknamed for the cure
his shell-shocked daddy tried. Speed went to war
(another war), came home stripped to bare,
forever racing brakeless. He settled north
with mountains topping him, their weight
like brakes in mercy stopping him.

— Dana Wildsmith

Dana Wildsmith is the author of three books of poetry, and has a new collection, *One Good Hand,* forthcoming from Iris Press. She lives in Bethlehem, Ga., and teaches English to non-English-speaking adults.

Though the ones in race car door panels may be unusual windows of opportunity, savvy teachers are making the best of young people's interest in motorsports and the concentration of the industry in the region.

Racing & Education

by Christy McCarley

"I'm still feeling pretty revved up," laughs Carol Walters of Wilson, N.C., after settling back into work at Rock Ridge Elementary School weeks after a five-day study of the science, history, and culture of the fast lane. She was among 24 North Carolina teachers who came together for "NASCAR: Science on the Race Track," a new seminar held in February 2005 in the heart of North Carolina stock-car racing country.

"I've always had an appreciation for stock-car racing; however, I wouldn't call myself a strong fan," Walters notes. "Now that I know what's behind the performance of the cars and drivers, I'll be watching the races in a whole new way."

And so will the students she counsels. Already she's busy counting NASCAR career options to tell them about — from technology, engineering, and research, to marketing, advertising, writing, even clothing design. "This seminar was very much a real-world experience for me."

> ***"Racing is much more than mechanics. It's unbelievably technical. Everything's about computers, just look under your car's hood."***
>
> ***—Driver Richard Petty***

The North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching

Teams of teachers compete in trials with miniature race cars during an activity that focuses on the physics of motion and design.

Another of the participants was Wayne Whaley of Morganton, a devoted NASCAR enthusiast. "If it's Sunday and there's a race on television, people know not to call me," he says. Like other educators, he returned to his school with new ideas for class projects as well as a prized souvenir photo of himself with his hero Richard Petty, "King of NASCAR."

The seminar, a project of the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching, was so full of hands-on activities that it took more than a year to plan and schedule. Traveling to Randleman, Concord, Mooresville, and Charlotte, the group delved into the science of speed and the origins of racing. They met with drivers and their families, including the famous Pettys, and they gained behind-the-scenes insights at wind tunnels and speedways. They also learned about NASCAR's economic contributions to the state, estimated by the North Carolina Motorsports Association to be more than $5 billion a year.

Today, hundreds of thousands of fans pack the interstates bumper-to-bumper as race days near at Charlotte, Daytona, Darlington, and other famous tracks around the country. Millions more watch the races on television. NASCAR's popularity has given rise to private racing schools, college programs, and racing museums, including one at Appalachian State University, in Boone, N.C. National sponsors, including many Fortune 500 companies, have expanded the sport's appeal.

In a session with the teachers, Petty, his wife, Linda, and daughter-in-law Pattie Petty explained that young people who dream of a career in NASCAR need advanced skills in technology. "Racing is much more than mechanics. It's unbelievably technical. Everything's about computers, just look under your car's hood," Richard Petty said. Pattie Petty agreed, noting: "Technology, engineering, computer skills — they're hugely important."

Seminar participants were guests at the Victory Junction Gang Camp of Randleman, established by Kyle and Pattie Petty to honor the memory of their son Adam, a fourth-generation driver with a promising future when he died in

ETSU Department of Communication

LIVE AT THE RACE TRACKS **Lauren Livesay and Mike Gibbons are among more than a dozen East Tennessee State University broadcast majors who have interned for Motor Racing Network Radio (MRN). Interns travel to races across the country to help MRN with its live feeds for use on the track's big screens and for broadcast to MRN's approximately 650 radio stations in 48 states. Students get practice doing basic camera, graphics, and grip work, as well as in developing short packages such as driver interviews and pit action. The paid internship was established about five years ago after ETSU broadcast division alum David Hyatt, now MRN's vice president and general manager, contacted the division. "As NASCAR and racing in general grow in popularity, so do the job opportunities," notes division director Tom Headley. "This is why this internship is so important." After graduating in 2002, Livesay was hired by MRN. Other grads work in racing production at the Speed cable network and as independent contractors.**

NCCAT

Teachers Beth Elmore of Claremont and Connie Greene of Morganton pose with Richard Petty following an NCCAT seminar session about NASCAR's history and economic contributions.

The Business Side of the Tracks

Barely a year old, East Tennessee State University's Motorsport Operations Partnership with Tri-Cities, Tenn.-Va., neighbor Bristol Motor Speedway is revving up, adding a new faculty member this fall and with additional graduate assistantships and courses on the horizon.

"Down the road I could see a specific program in motorsport management," says Tom Coates of ETSU's sport and leisure management initiative, which piggybacked motorsport studies into existing courses during the 2004-05 academic year.

It was an active inaugural year. In

See ETSU on page 20

The North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching

Wayne Whaley of Morganton and Shawn Lovitt of Winterville plan the design of a miniature racing model.

> *"It reminded me that as teachers we need to know where our students' interests lie and seek out ways to engage them through those interests."*
> *—Kellie Thompson, a teacher at American Renaissance Charter School in Statesville*

2000 in a New Hampshire racing accident at the age of 19. Adam Petty had visited a camp in Florida for chronically ill children and expressed an interest in starting one.

His mother, a former kindergarten teacher, told the seminar group that her kind-hearted son wasn't an outstanding student in school. He couldn't relate the academic subjects to his main interest—cars, she said.

"Listening to Adam's story was very moving for me. It reminded me that as teachers we need to know where our students' interests lie and seek out ways to engage them through those interests," observes Kellie Thompson, a teacher at American Renaissance Charter School in Statesville.

As they explored the NASCAR industry, the teachers toured Lowe's Motor Speedway, Penske Racing South, Roush Racing, Petty Enterprises, and the Sam Bass Art Gallery. At the NASCAR Research and Development facility in Concord they learned of projects ranging from the futuristic "car of tomorrow" to more immediate concerns, such as safer "soft" walls at the speedways.

During an activity focusing on the physics of motion and design, they formed teams and competed in racing trials—not in real cars but with miniature models built from materials donated by Carolina Biological Supply of Burlington. Many of the teachers plan to replicate that activity in their classrooms. "This is right up the alley for a class that I teach on the fundamentals of design," says Whaley. "It's a great project for my students."

Christy McCarley is public information coordinator at the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching, based in Cullowhee, N.C. This piece is adapted by permission from the center's spring newsletter. For more, see www.nccat.org.

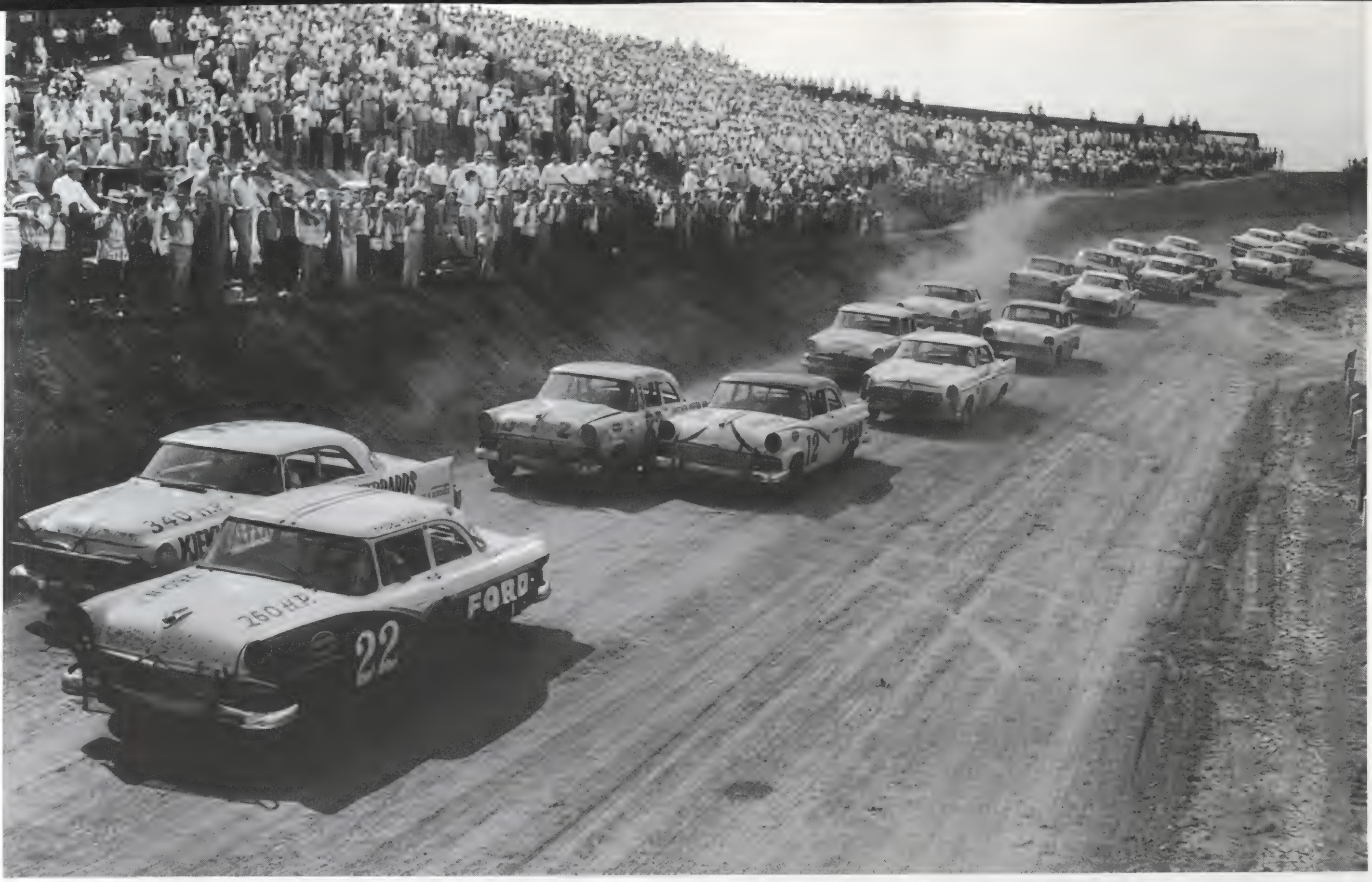
Bristol, Bremen, Britain, and Beyond: NASCAR Racing's Road to Global Success

by Guy Faulkner

My personal journey to NASCAR began rather surprisingly in Bremen, Germany, in October 2003. I was speaking at an international conference there about the research that I had done with a colleague on behalf of the UK motorsport industry and four regional development agencies and the subsequent workforce development plan we produced. This plan resulted in the UK government awarding the UK motorsport industry approximately £16 million ($30 million) for education and business support services, about half of it specifically for education.

At an evening reception given by the Bremen Chamber of Commerce, I was approached by someone from the group of U.S. academics at the conference. It turned out to be East Tennessee State University's Jon Smith, director of the Bureau of Business and Research. He was interested in the economic impact aspects of my work, and he told me about Bristol Motor Speedway, which at that time I had little knowledge of.

In March 2004 I received an e-mail from Smith recalling our conversation and informing me that ETSU was developing a motorsport operations partnership with Bristol Motor Speedway. He asked if there were any opportunities for me to come over to ETSU by way of an exchange visit. Coincidently within a day or


© DON HUNTER/Stock Car Racing Collection, Appalachian State University

APPALACHIAN STATE COLLECTION IS ON TRACK

A racing jacket autographed by Richard Petty, a recording of Robin Lane's tribute to Dale Earnhardt called "Red Flag on Earth, Green Flag on Heaven," mockups of Wheaties boxes featuring NASCAR drivers, pit passes, and race programs join videos, magazines, and nearly 600 books in Appalachian State University's Stock Car Racing Collection. Among the visuals included in the collection, housed in the university's Belk Library, is this shot by motorsports photographer Don Hunter. Taken in 1956, it captures racing action at the Asheville-Weaverville Speedway in North Carolina. He donated a variety of photographs as well as mockups of General Mills cereal boxes featuring his work. Suzanne Wise, who oversees the public special collection, sees its strengths as its extensive clippings file and monographs. Go to her office, and you'll see some of her personal racing collection—a section of auto sheet metal autographed by driver Casey Atwood and team owner Ray Evernham of Evernham Motorsports and signed photos of actor Burt Reynolds and director Hal Needham from *Stroker Ace.* These, too, will join the university's special collection on her retirement, she says. Others having materials to donate or seeking materials to use should check out the web site, www.library.appstate.edu/stockcar.

so, I was notified of a call for grant monies from the UK's Higher Education Funding Council for England. The criteria in relation to an international focus and my research seemed to fit, so I applied and received approval and funding to spend six months at ETSU.

The research project was to look at the partnership between the industry and education that had been developed, particularly as it was focused on the sport from the perspective of sport management rather than performance engineering. This perfectly reflected my earlier research findings about the crucial and integral nature of the relationship between the sport and the industry, and their interdependence. I also planned to investigate the nature, breadth, and types of motorsport in the U.S., how they related to education and skills, and how these skills were acquired and taught.

Arrangements were agreed that I would come to ETSU from January to July 2005. In preparation for the visit, I embarked on a Motorsport Industry Association (MIA) UK Government Trade Mission to NASCAR in May 2004. This resulted in a re-

ETSU University Relations

Guy Faulkner, far right, discusses motorsports operations with some of the participants at the Bristol Motor Speedway symposium on April 1, 2005.

ETSU from page 17

January, the speedway put a graduate assistant to work, offering a stipend, tuition, and 20 hours a week of real world experience — in this case, helping to organize its campground reservation system. Two other graduate students had summer internships — one at BMS and one at Atlanta Motor Speedway.

What sets the ETSU-BMS partnership apart is that it focuses on the business and human aspects of motorsports. "We're not preparing drivers or team members or mechanics or people to design or build cars," Coates notes. Instead, the emphasis is on facility operations, marketing, finance, public relations, sponsorships — all those things that it takes to get people "on the field and in the stands."

— Norma Wilson

ETSU University Relations photos

Bob Plummer

A pace car stop on campus brought attention to the launch of the ETSU-BMS Motorsport Operations Partnership. ETSU's Tom Coates, far left, and President Paul Stanton, in the driver's seat, join BMS President Jeff Byrd at the March 2004 event. Just a year later the partnership sponsored a spring symposium at BMS that attracted 70 participants from 16 colleges and universities and five states. They got to view practice runs from a skybox (above) and to meet with speedway administration. BMS's Kevin Triplett, far right, leads a roundtable discussion.

port entitled "Education in the NASCAR Heartland." On the trade mission I went to Lowe's Motor Speedway in Charlotte and watched both the Nextel All Stars and the Coca-Cola 600 as my first experiences of NASCAR. I was hooked.

I watched fascinated to see NASCAR as racing, NASCAR as sport, NASCAR as culture, NASCAR as lifestyle, NASCAR as religion, NASCAR as fun, NASCAR as excitement. During the visit I also came to ETSU, and visited it and Bristol Motor Speedway. Why, I asked BMS president and general manager Jeff Byrd, would people come here to watch others race?

He told me about Las Vegas Motor Speedway and the concept of "destination," a complete family experience, beyond racing. So in November 2004 I visited the Las Vegas race track, with its impressive and versatile facilities and variety of track configurations. Interesting as it was for me, I found it had no personality, no charisma. It was bland. I couldn't taste or feel it.

In contrast, in January 2005, when I returned to ETSU and headed out to Bristol with Tom Coates, who heads the ETSU-speedway partnership, my excitement was immense. The speedway came into view, more awesome than I remembered, more majestic. Jeff Byrd and his team had been busy. The Bruton Smith Building (office complex and fan center) had been built, finished, and named. New skybox suites were being built. Extra seats had been added to the dragway. But this visit was nothing compared to attending my first race there, BMS's spring Food City 500. Raw energy, adrenalin, color, noise, taste, smell — the closeness of a vibrant gladiatorial arena.

The real experience was observing the dynamics of the interplay between the event and the customers — the fan experience. I was struck by the diversity of the fan base, the smiling faces, joy, pleasure, and excitement. I saw this same fan experience replicated at National Hot Rod Association drag racing. A different event, different fans, but a good quality experience delivered, and it showed on those fans' faces, too.

The global nature of motorsport was never more finely underlined than the 89th running of the U.S. classic race, the Indianapolis 500. Won by an English driver, driving an Italian

Additional Educational Ventures in the Region

Driver schools, engine building and repair, safety engineering, and more. Throughout the region, schools and organizations are forging ahead to develop course offerings to meet the racing industry's needs for a technically skilled workforce and the demands of an expanding fan base. There's even a health education initiative under way to help race fans to quit smoking.

Here are a few of note:

- Clemson University recently unveiled the master plan for a research campus in Greenville, S.C., to help make the state "a hub in the nation's automotive and motorsports industry." Clemson-ICAR (International Center for Automotive Research) is to be a 250-acre campus with five hilltop villages, each with a specialty. These will be completed in phases with the first, the BMW Information Technology Research Center, to open this fall. Clemson has developed a graduate program in motorsports engineering to assist race teams and others.
- Virginia Tech, in cooperation with the Virginia International Raceway near Danville, Va., has established VIPER (Virginia Institute for Performance Engineering and Research), an advanced vehicle dynamics testing facility. Courses in dynamics and vehicle engineering are in development.
- Lanier Technical College, in Oakwood, Ga., trains racing mechanics for jobs in all varieties of motorsports, including NASCAR and NHRA. The Motorsports Vehicle Technology Program began in 2000 in partnership with the Panoz Racing School and has had transmissions donated by TTC.

The North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching

Andrew McFarland, a teacher at Falkland Elementary School in Greenville, N.C., gets a perspective from behind the wheel of a race car on display at Victory Junction Gang Camp, the site for a five-day seminar about the NASCAR industry held by the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching. In the summertime, the camp, established by Kyle and Pattie Petty as a memorial to their son Adam, becomes a haven for chronically ill children. The kids, who come to camp at no charge, sleep in cabins named for famous speedways, dine in the "Fuel Stop" cafeteria, and get medical care at the "Body Shop."

Elsewhere students are getting chances to build truck-racing engines, form their own race teams and build a car for competition against other student teams, handle registration of drivers and crew members, and develop media kits for race tracks. Pair that with training led by drivers and teams, and there's a whole lot of learning going on.

chassis, with a Japanese engine, on American tires, as part of an American-owned team.

The complex relationship between the sport and the industry was also firmly illustrated by the disastrous events at the 2005 Formula One Grand Prix at Indianapolis with team pullouts and refund woes. Despite having some of the most advanced technical engineering and expertise in the world, the governing body who controlled the staging of the event, sadly, forgot that ultimately it is the fans — the consumers — who provide the sport and the industry with its resources, directly through ticket sales and indirectly via their sponsors having their goods and services marketed and sold.

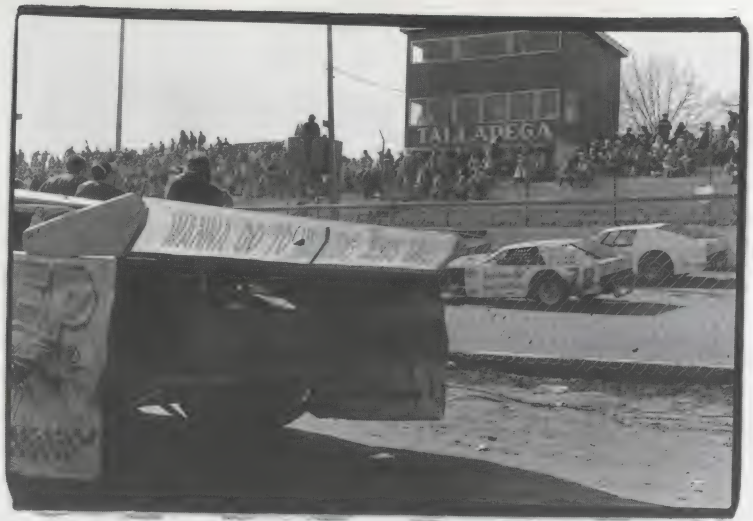
How not to do it, in stark contrast to what NASCAR is famous for the world over, for doing it right — a marketing and mechandising phenomenon, providing the fans with what they want. Simple concentration on the likes of the three T's — tickets, toilets, and traffic — make it hassle free, make it easy for race fans!

NASCAR events are now telecast to more than 150 countries worldwide, in over 20 different languages, airing more than 4,000 hours outside the U.S. in 2005. NASCAR.com is ranked third in American sports, in foreign traffic on its web site. There are active stock car racing organizations in England, Mexico, Japan, Brazil, and Canada. Engines are being made for NASCAR with components from all over the world.

"We're very much in the early stages of examining the opportunities that exist and what makes sense for us internationally," Robbie Weiss, NASCAR international managing director, said in March 2005. "If you look around the world, there's a tremendous following for motorsports. What we don't know right now is what role NASCAR plays in that. We don't know how big or what degree that could be. What we're trying to do is patiently find what will work for us."

Obviously there is much that international motorsports and NASCAR can learn from one another.

Guy Faulkner is a visiting professor in motorsport operations at East Tennessee State University from the Organizational and Individual Development Group of the University of Westminster in London, England.



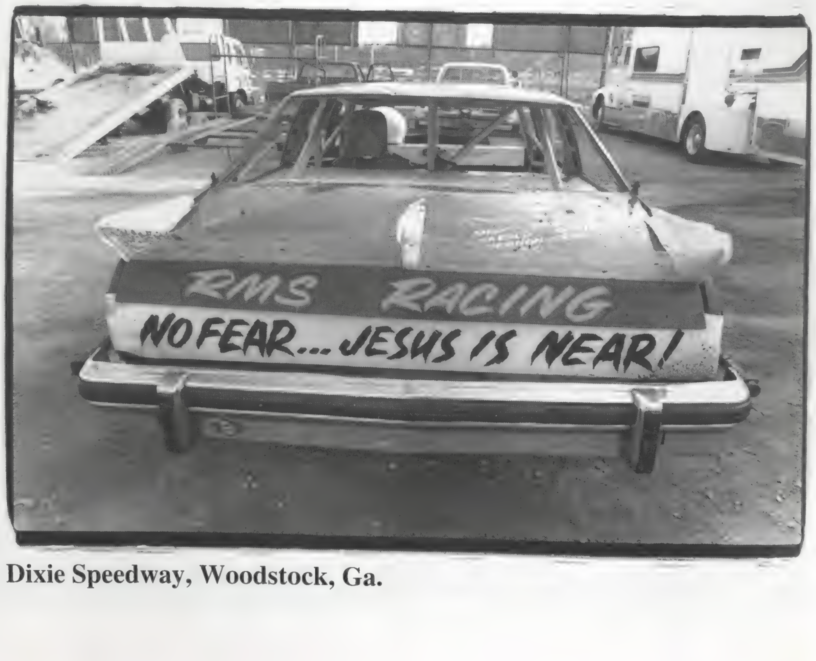
Above, Talladega Short Track, Talladega, Ala. At right, Chickasaw Speedway, Okolona, Miss.

Praise the Lord & Mash the Accelerator

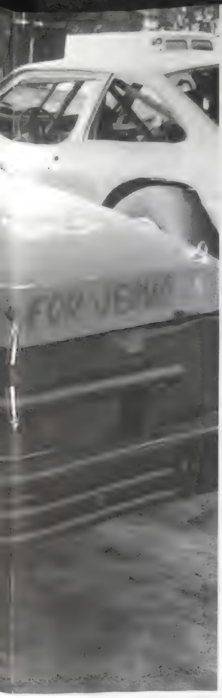
Fans, fenders, and drivers help spread the Word

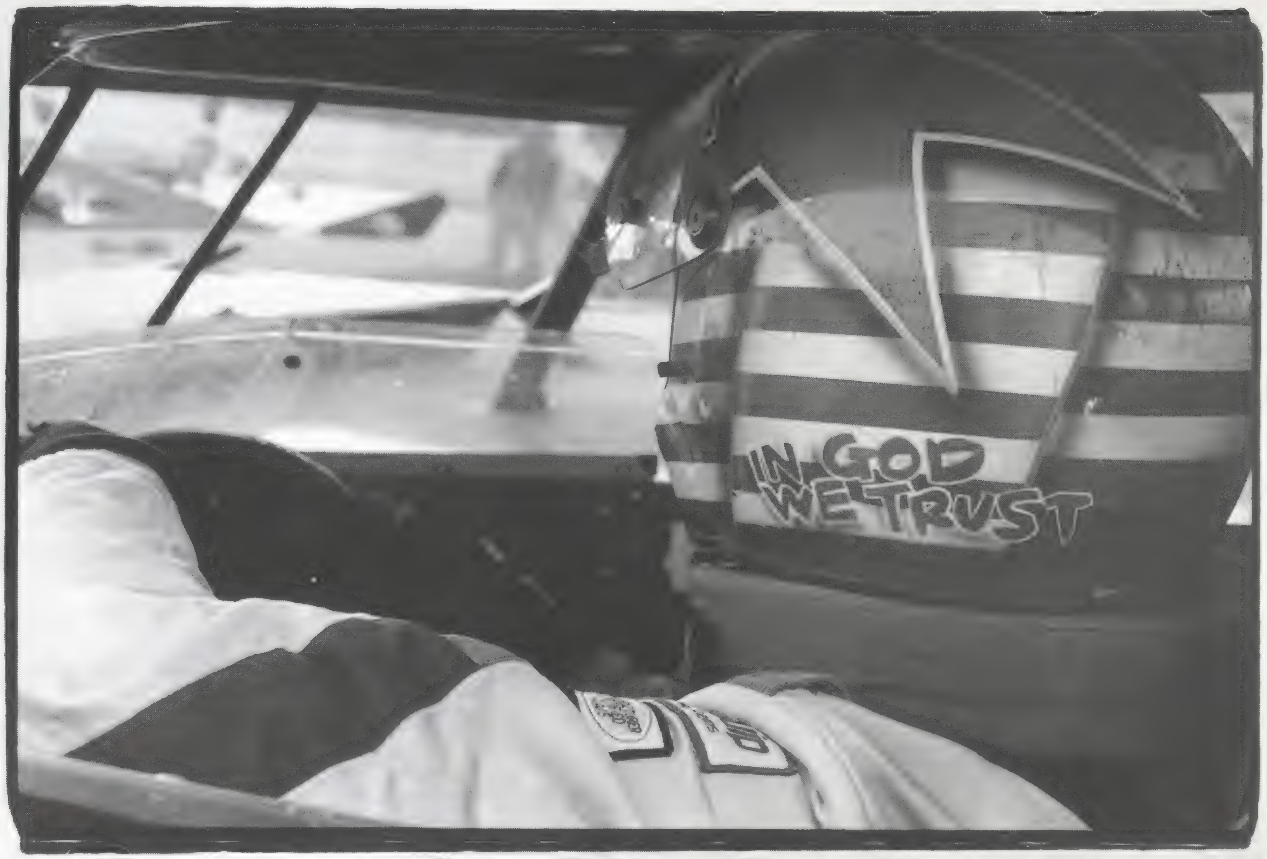
Photo essay by Susan Bauer Lee

The religious messages on cars first drew Susan Bauer Lee to photograph grassroots dirt racing, something she has been doing over the past two decades. Previously she had focused her lens and interest on roadside religion, hand-painted church signs, religious graffiti, and roadside memorials. "I've been fascinated for years with visual expressions of faith," she says. "When I went to my first dirt race at Dixie Speedway in Woodstock, Ga., about 16 years ago, it was the messages on the cars that caught my eye and I began photographing." The images she shares here are part of a larger body of work called *Thunder & Grace: Racing on American Dirt.* An exhibit of her work by the same name was featured at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture early last year at the University of Mississippi.

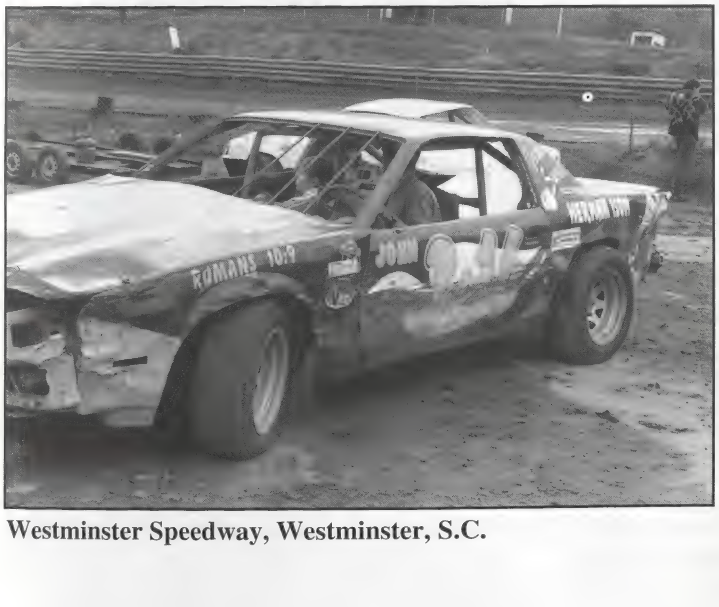


Dixie Speedway, Woodstock, Ga.

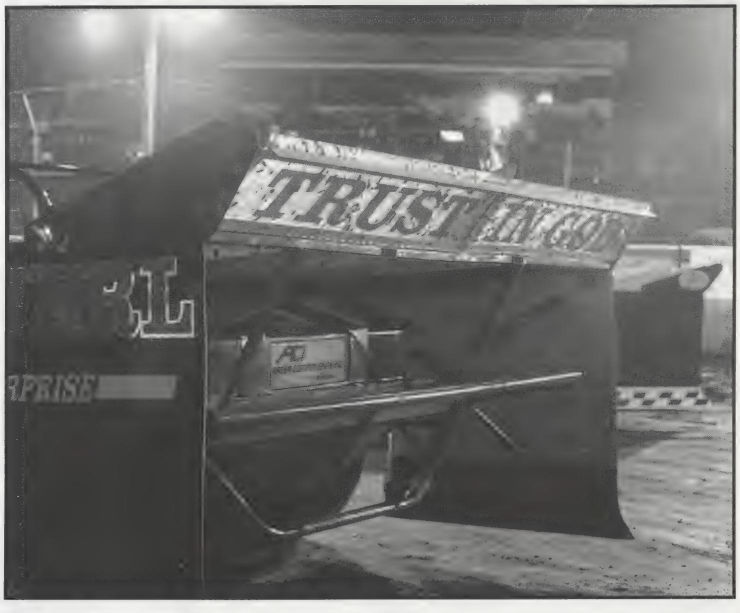



IN GOD
WE TRUST

Volunteer Speedway, Bulls Gap, Tenn.


ROMANS 10:9
JOHN

Westminster Speedway, Westminster, S.C.

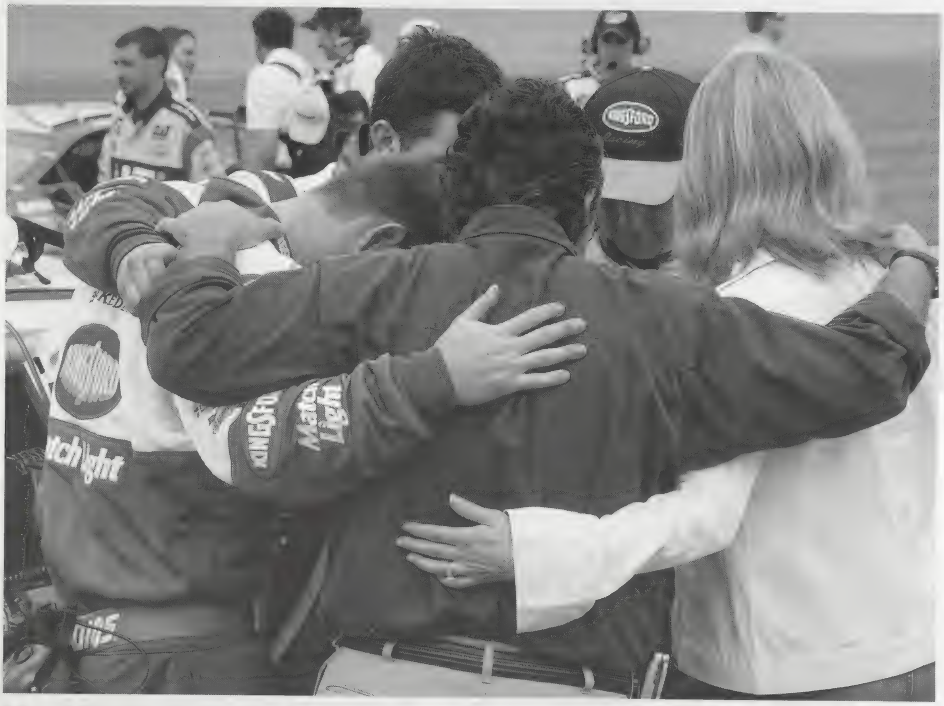

TRUST IN GOD
RPRISE

Cleveland Speedway, Cleveland, Tenn.

Religion Takes to the Raceway

from ABC News — World News Tonight

Faith finds a prominent place on the NASCAR circuit– and other tracks.



Billy Mauldin, Motor Racing Outreach, www.go2mro.com

Motor Racing Outreach chaplain Kenny Crosswhite prays on the starting grid with members of the ST Motorsports Busch Series team before the 2004 Daytona 500.

Amid the torso-rattling, ear-shattering action of NASCAR thrives a rich vein of religion. Auto racing is the only major sport with a pre-game invocation, and some drivers are making a point to actively promote their faith.

Driver Bobby Labonte's car featured advertisements for the movie *The Passion of the Christ,* and Morgan Shepherd's car simply bears Jesus's name by way of a large decal.

"When I display it on the hood of my car and these people see it, maybe somebody's life will be changed," Shepherd says.

Evangelical pastor Dale Beaver is the assistant director of Motor Racing Outreach, a ministry for drivers and their families who spend time away from home on the racing circuit. Beaver ministers to drivers and pit crews and runs a mobile Sunday school for their children.

He also holds pre-race prayer services, which are attended by such high-profile drivers as Jeff Gordon and Jimmie

RFC
Racers For Christ
INTERNATIONAL

Susan Bauer Lee

A fan at the Riverside Speedway in West Memphis, Ark., sports a Racers for Christ t-shirt. RFC was founded in 1978 and claims to provide pre-race chapel services at over 600 races each year, including drag racing, open wheel racing, motorcycle racing, boat racing, stock car racing, off-road racing, and street rodding events.

Johnson. “Athletes are so worshipped by the fan base that I try to help these guys deflect that worship to one who is greater than they,” notes Beaver.

Faith can provide a competitive advantage in the risky sport. If a driver believes he is in God’s hands, says driver Michael Waltrip, it minimizes his fear and maximizes his focus. “I do all I can do, and then I turn it over to Him,” Waltrip says. “And that way, I don’t worry about it. You know, I go out and race.”

> ***“When Superman takes a bullet, everybody starts asking questions about life or death.”***
>
> ***—Dale Beaver, assistant director of Motor Racing Outreach, about Dale Earnhardt***

Beaver prays with drivers before each race, going from car to car to wish each man luck and safety.

He helped the NASCAR community endure tragedy, as well, after legend Dale Earnhardt was killed in a multi-car accident during the 2001 Daytona 500. “He was our Superman,” Beaver says of Earnhardt. “When Superman takes a bullet, everybody starts asking questions about life or death.”

Perhaps because NASCAR developed in the Bible Belt, it’s probably the most openly religious of all sports. But athletes in other sports have increasingly become public about their faith—something some people are uncomfortable with. When players point toward the heavens, pray on the field, or give credit for a win to God, some fans can feel alienated.

“To me, that’s saying, ‘If you love me, you need to love my God,’” comments *Sports Illustrated* magazine columnist Rick Reilly. “And so, for a Jewish kid or a Muslim kid in the stands, they’re like, ‘Hey, wait a minute.’”

If NASCAR had a Muslim driver, Beaver says, “I would respect that, and I would ask him if I could pray with them. And he may not want me to, and that would be fine.”

NASCAR drivers defend their right to profess their faith. But they are aware that, as they expand to more secular parts of the country, it could turn off potential fans.

But for now, at least, they’re unrepentant. N&T

Dan Harris of ABC News filed this report for “World News Tonight.” It originally aired May 4, 2005, and is reprinted by permission, though this doesn’t reflect an endorsement of *Now & Then* magazine by ABC News or any of its affiliates.

Slipping the Clutch

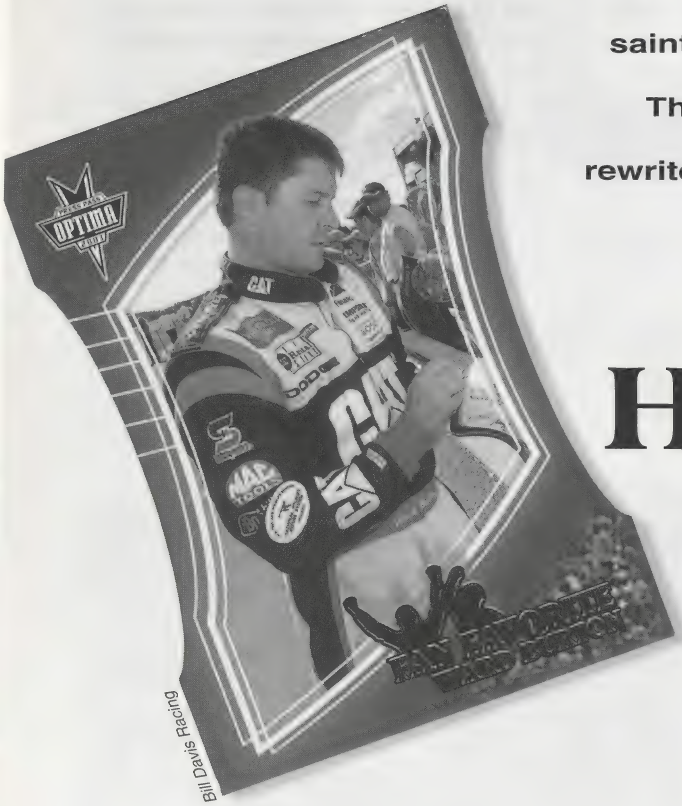
Traffic’s so slow, even in first I can’t
move without stalling, so I keep
slipping the clutch, passing the time,
concentrate on moving
just fast enough
just slow enough
to avoid bumping the car in front
or stalling the engine.
I look in the rear view mirror,
prop my elbow on the frame,
lean my head on my hand
impatient at the long delay.
Twenty minutes to go a mile.
Half an hour, and I see the reason—
blue lights flashing
orange lights flashing
black and white police cars
white ambulances
a tow truck.
Only when I’m right on it
do I see the Chevy
flipped on the dusty berm.
Though the car’s empty,
*some*body’s dead.
I think of my grown son
and daughter,
and the narrow escape
we’ve managed a while—
amusing ourselves,
keeping a steady speed,
blessedly unable
to see just what’s ahead.

—Edwina Pendarvis

Edwina Pendarvis lives in Huntington, W.Va. Her poems appear in *Appalachian Heritage, Appalachian Journal, Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel,* and *Wind Magazine.* She also has two published collections, *Like the Mountains of China* (Blair Mountain Press) and *Human Landscapes* (Bottom Dog Press).

Sharyn McCrumb

It sure wasn't anything frivolous like 'a nice smile,' or saintly like the racer who was at the heart of my novel. The guy whose Daytona win in 2002 meant weeks of rewrite for me won my allegiance through an irresistible combo — skill and caring.



Bill Davis Racing

How I Found *MY* Driver

by Sharyn McCrumb

Somewhere in the process of trying to learn enough about racing to write a novel set in NASCAR, I became hooked on the sport. First I started understanding what was going on, beyond the fact of circling a track for 200 laps or so at 180 mph. Then I learned faces, home states, car numbers, back stories.

Finally I was able to detect differences in drivers' technique, the way that a ballet aficionado can tell a novice ballerina from the Bolshoi Ballet star. Matt Kenseth (#17) is Baryshnikov-elegant, grace on wheels at speeds I don't even want to think about. My respect for his driving skill is boundless.

But he's not *my driver.* I didn't have one.

> ***Choosing a driver is a mysterious process — a complex blend of emotions akin to buying a computer, choosing a puppy, and falling in love. It has nothing to do with winning races. I do know that.***

Your *driver* — the guy you will root for in races, win or lose, year after year; whose number will become part of your ATM password or your license plate; whose team colors will begin to infiltrate your wardrobe; whose face will stare back at you from the coffee mug, the mouse pad, the poster on the wall above the keyboard…

WILDLIFE FOUNDATION
Ward Burton
NATURE FOR FU

The Ward Burton Wildlife Foundation (www.twbwf.org)

Could it be Ward Burton? Was it the complex combination of his racing skills and his concerns for the environment?

Choosing a driver is a mysterious process — a complex blend of emotions akin to buying a computer, choosing a puppy, and falling in love. It has nothing to do with winning races. I do know that.

In June I watched someone who was a total stranger to motorsports morph into a NASCAR fan and quite arbitrarily (I thought) "fall in love" with Kyle Petty in the course of a day. I had no influence on her choice.

She was the non-NASCAR fan who read my novel to see if she'd like it without knowing the sport. I took her to a couple of race shops in North Carolina, and then around Concord Mills, a trove of NASCAR souvenir stores, where, striving for objectivity, I brought her up to speed on who's who in Cup racing. We flipped through a poster rack: *Tony Stewart, Rusty Wallace, Dale Earnhardt Jr.* We examined the studio portraits of two young drivers, as dramatically lit and solemnly posed as high school yearbook photos: Jimmie Johnson, Mr. Cool, captain of the football team, and his little buddy Matt, president of the audio-visual club. They don't get any better looking than Jimmie Johnson, and Matt Kenseth is the boy next door. (He was also the reigning Nextel Cup Champion at the time.)

> ***I once heard a couple arguing over whether to buy towel racks from Tony or Jimmie, by which they meant the home improvement store sponsors of their respective drivers. Price and quality of towel racks not an object.***

No sale.

"Okay, how about Ryan Newman?" I said, as she filled a basket with Kyle Petty mugs and key chains. "Engineering degree from Purdue. Looks like Prince Andrew. He wins *a lot.*"

"Uh-huh," she said, reaching past me to pick up a Kyle Petty bumper sticker.

"Kyle Petty?" I said, handing her the die-cast #45 car for the shopping basket.

She contemplated the craggy face on the coffee mug. "He has a nice smile," she said at last, nodding to herself. End of discussion. Her desk at the library is now a shrine to Kyle Petty. To this day she has never seen him race. Go figure.

My motorsports mentor, who would have a Ph.D. in NASCAR if they gave one, is a Terry Labonte fan. Doesn't matter if he wins or not. Like all serious relationships, this one is for better or for worse.

Another friend roots for Kevin Harvick, because he drives the Goodwrench car, which used to be the ride of the late Dale Earnhardt. Sacred wheels, I guess. I know people who say they chose a driver because of his home state, or his sponsor. Or you become a Jeff Gordon fan to spite your Dale Jr. in-laws. One guy told me he chose Mark Martin because Martin had the guts to do Viagra commercials. He said he respected that.

Find out who a person's *driver* is, and you have a key to their soul: *Do you identify socially with the cast of* Friends? (#24, #48 — both Californians). *One who values skill over charisma?* (#6; #40: shut up and drive). *Hostile toward authority figures?* (#97; #20 — the numbers of the Beast).

I once heard a couple arguing over whether to buy towel racks from *Tony* or *Jimmie,* by which they meant the home improvement store sponsors of their respective drivers. Price and quality of towel racks not an object; it was pure partisanship. *(Jimmie won. As usual.)*

I finished my novel last winter, but I'm still watching races. I didn't have "a driver," though. Finally, after two years of not much caring who won — one day, I did.

Late June: watching Daytona Happy Hour practice in the Labonte Memorial Chapel (otherwise known as my mentor's living room.) A red and black Chevy went airborne, and I went to pieces.

"You got you a driver," my mentor said.

That was Ward Burton's car, and I knew it.

Ward Burton? The first time I registered his existence was when I realized — 50,000 words too late — that *he* had won the 2002 Daytona 500, instead of Dale Jr., thus ruining a basic premise of my novel. I spent a couple of weeks rewriting. It's a better book for that, but I wasn't happy about it at the time. So Ward Burton had to go into the story. Who the heck was he?

By the time Happy Hour rolled around, much research later, I knew very well who he was… a great guy… whose car had

CHEVROLET
Advance Auto Parts
500
AT MARTINSVILLE
VIRGINIA
JCL-5548

Lisa Kipps-Brown

For Sharyn McCrumb, Ward Burton it is. He even joined her on the inaugural stop of her *St. Dale* book tour. Here they are outside Cantos Books in Roanoke, Va.

just wrecked on the same track where Dale… where Neil…

The Kleenex box landed in my lap. "Yeah, you got you a driver, all right."

Ward Burton.—Okay. How did that happen? *Because he's an incredible driver?* He won the Daytona 500, and he holds qualifying records at two tracks, but at his level of competition, excellence is a given. *Because he's from Virginia?* So is Elliott Sadler. *Because he's handsome?* (See McMurray, Jamie) Or because, with all due respect to rookie Kasey Kahne, I don't own any sweaters older than Ward Burton. Maybe all of that figures into it somehow.

But Ricky Rudd is all those things, too. Ask me if I care.

> ***A red and black Chevy went airborne, and I went to pieces. "You got you a driver," my mentor said.***

I think what clinched it for me was the paradox of a race car driver who is an environmentalist. Writers love complexity, and he breaks every stereotype in the world. In 1996 he founded The Ward Burton Wildlife Foundation to promote wildlife conservation, protect natural habitats, and to educate people about the need for the preservation of the environment. All his life he has loved the wilderness.

Here's a guy who, at age 12, would have his parents drop him off in the woods on Friday afternoons, so that he could stay all weekend alone in a rustic cabin, fending for himself until they picked him up on Sunday evening. That boy grew up determined to save the wilderness areas he'd loved as a child: land that is worth a fortune. How could he rescue vast areas from developers? By becoming a famous race car driver, using his high profile for fund raising and leadership.

Change the world. Keep them from paving some of it, anyhow. *And he's doing it.* It blows me away.

Since *St. Dale* was published in February, I'm spending a year on tour, telling audiences that their stereotypical assumptions about NASCAR are wrong. Prove it? *Okay, let me tell you about the driver who has a wildlife foundation…* Maybe I'll take along some brochures.

My books have always defended rural and Southern traditions. I suppose it was inevitable that I would take on the perception of NASCAR, whose supporters are maligned and underestimated. I hope I have enough authority by now to make a dent in that negative image. This novel is my chance to fight the stereotypes. So, just by existing, Ward Burton made my job easier. *(If he didn't exist, I swear I would have invented him.)*

One last thing. The time I met Ward Burton, he was staring at the cover of a book about the Civil War, oblivious to a crowd of people waiting in line for his autograph. Then he looked up and said quite earnestly, "I would like to read that book."

My driver. Oh, yeah. N&T

Award-winning author Sharyn McCrumb was born in North Carolina and currently lives and writes at Blackacre, near the Appalachian Trail in Virginia's Blue Ridge. Her latest book, *St. Dale,* is a departure from her ballad books that include *The Songcatcher,* from 2001, *Ghost Rider,* and *The Ballad of Frankie Silver.* You can find more about McCrumb and her new work at www.sharynmccrumb.com, or at www.stdale.com

Ward Burton tells how he came to be equally at home on the race track and in the woods.

Say, Who Is That Mild-Mannered Man?

by Sharyn McCrumb

Most NASCAR fans have a poster or a T-shirt of their favorite driver, or, if they're lucky, his autograph. I know how fortunate I am to have *my* driver on *speed dial.* While a friendship between a best-selling author and a Daytona 500 winner might sound like Xena and Hercules on paper, in reality for me, it's more like… well… Lois Lane: friends with a gentle, soft-spoken guy who at times puts on a "costume" and does absolutely amazing things at incredible speeds.

To me, that persona seems like someone else entirely. The man is Ward Burton; his driver alter-ego, I call "the Angel of Death." Sometimes I even leave phone messages for *him,* if I have a racing question. When I hang out with Ward, he's wearing faded jeans and driving a Dodge pickup. In person I've never seen him in the fire suit and the shades—and if I did, I wonder if he would seem like a stranger to me.

Most of Ward Burton's life has been spent along a five-mile stretch of Highway 501 in Southside Virginia, east of Danville, in a county that is now home to The Ward Burton Wildlife Foundation: a 2,100-acre tract along the Staunton River that once belonged to his lifelong friend and mentor C.R. Sanders. With his NASCAR earnings Ward bought the land and turned it into a nature conservancy, ensuring that it will never be developed.

It is there—in the Cove—that he spent the winter weekends of his adolescence, dropped off by his parents on Friday afternoon and left to fend for himself in the woods, with a bedroll, a shotgun, and a fishing rod. He slept in an unheated cabin with no electricity or run-

ning water, and he subsisted on whatever he shot or what fish he caught in the river, and at dusk on Sunday, the car came back up the dirt road again and picked him up to go home and get ready for school.

That childhood seems a strange beginning for a man who became the first Virginian to win the Daytona 500, a NASCAR driver who twice won the Southern 500 at Darlington, and whose qualifying record at that track still stands a decade later. Yet his love of the wilderness never diminished, and it is this duality of speed and pastoral serenity that makes him complex and fascinating.

SM: That little boy — trying to be a pioneer about 200 years too late — grew up and won the Daytona 500? That ending doesn't seem linear somehow.

WB: People always tell me how strange it is that I am equally at home in the woods and in the loud and fast sport of stock car racing, but it seems perfectly natural to me. I have always been a part of both those worlds. I was racing go-carts from the age of 8, which is about the same age that I started going out to the Cove. My father did some racing locally when he was young, and my grandfather was an outdoorsman and a state champion in skeet-shooting, so I come by both of those passions honestly, I guess.

Did you always know that you wanted to be a race car driver?

I raced throughout my childhood, beginning with go-carts, but I stopped when I went to Hargrave Military Academy. In my sophomore year there we had to write an essay in English class on what we wanted to be when we grew up. In my paper I said I wanted to be a race car driver. When the teacher handed back the graded essays, he had given mine low marks. He told me to rewrite it and choose a more realistic goal than that. Years later, after I made it into Cup racing, that teacher told me that he tells that story to people as a reminder never to deter the dream of a child.

But you weren't racing while you were at Hargrave. You were captain of the rifle team. So how did you get back in the car?

I attended Elon College, wanting to study philosophy, but after three years, I didn't really know what I wanted to do with my life, so I dropped out and moved back to the Cove, where I spent two years, trapping, working construction, and trying to figure out what I wanted. One night, when my youngest brother, Jeff, was racing at South Boston Speedway, I went out to watch him. By the end of the night I'd decided that I wanted to get back into racing, and by the early '90s I had worked my way up from regional tracks to NASCAR.

CAT
SIMPSON
BOSCH
TEMPSTAR
SHERWIN-WILLIAMS
CertainTeed
RACING CHAMPIONS
SAFETY SOLUTIONS
CAT

Bill Davis Racing

Mild-mannered conservationist Ward Burton transforms into Sharyn McCrumb's "Angel of Death" when he dons his fire suit and sunglasses. It is this duality that McCrumb finds complex and fascinating about *her* driver.

If you hadn't gone into racing, what would you have done?

I think I would have done some kind of work connected to conservation or forestry — a park ranger or a wildlife biologist, maybe. … But I feel very fortunate to have been given the opportunity to have a career in NASCAR, because that success made it possible for me to realize my dream of preserving the Cove for future generations.

What does it feel like to drive 180 mph around a track? Is the world a blur?

No. When you look straight ahead everything is as clear as if you were standing still. It's only blurry when you look out of the corner of your eye. And, yes, you can see people in the stands sometimes. Oddly enough, when there is no one near you on the track, and you are way ahead, the car seems to slow down, maybe because you can focus on the track instead of having to react to the potential hazard of other cars around you.

In Cup racing you have to drive at nearly 200 mph for more than three hours, never getting out of the car, and stopping for only 13 seconds at pit stops, how do you—

It's hot in a race car. If you sweat enough, you don't have to—

That *wasn't* what I was going to ask!—How do you keep focused for so long—because at those speeds a moment's inattention could get you killed.

I call it "putting on the helmet." It's like a Zen state of concentration. I can't do it in regular life any more than you can—think about just one thing for long periods of time. My mind would wander. But when I put the helmet on and get in that race car, the rest of the world ceases to exist for the duration of that race. I'm 100 percent there, totally focused.

This may be a long question with a short answer, but I've heard many race fans wonder if the drivers know how much they are loved—even by people who have never met them. A race fan might name a child or a pet after a driver, build a shrine to him in the yard, plaster their vehicles with driver icons. And worry about him. Last year at the Brickyard when Scott Riggs wrecked you, I cried for an hour because I was so afraid you were hurt, and at that time the sum total of our acquaintance was about one minute. But you were *my* driver, and even when you were two laps down in the race, I cared more about how you were doing than about who was winning.

Wa-all, thank you.

Get over yourself, Ward. I'm talking about the Angel of Death now, not *you*. But do NASCAR drivers know how much people care about them?

I have always been humbled by it, and grateful for the opportunity to be a role model so that I could be a spokesman for causes like conservation… to be able to go to schools and talk to children, and know that because of what I've done on a race track I can hold their attention on more serious matters. My success in racing has enabled me to reach so many people in causes that I'm passionate about, and it allowed me to fulfill a lifelong dream of saving that land that meant so much to me when I was growing up.

> ***"My success in racing has enabled me to reach so many people in causes that I'm passionate about, and it allowed me to fulfill a lifelong dream of saving that land that meant so much to me when I was growing up."***
>
> ***—NASCAR driver Ward Burton***

I came into Cup racing later than most people, and I vowed to myself that I would never let the fame or the money change me or make me think I was better than the next guy. Behind those opaque shades, I'm still just me. But it's a blast when kids come up to me and think I'm some kind of hero—like Spider Man, maybe. Sometimes in the heat of the moment I'll have to pass by adults *(waiting for autographs or to talk to him),* but I never ignore a child.

What do you think racing has done for you personally and for the region as a whole?

For the region, racing has brought in millions of dollars, not only in jobs, but also for all the businesses that are the support system for the racing spectators: restaurants, hotels, and so on. It has brought so many people into the Southeast, and given us a chance to change their perceptions about the region, because they may come for the race, but they often stay a few extra days and see other attractions while they're here: parks, museums, and so on.

For me personally? Racing gave me a chance to make a difference—to be heard—in the causes that I feel passionate about, whether it is environmental concerns or politics. It has given my children opportunities they would not otherwise have had. *(He laughs.)* And I met *you*. If I had been just a country boy from Southside, I'd never have gotten the cell phone number of a famous author.

It's no use telling me to get over *myself*. I want that last line on my tombstone.

Strapped In, Before the Flag

For #44

Behind the visor, follow the narrow path,
that focused beam of the now.
The rush of walkout, autograph gauntlet over,
window net fastened, fitted seat and neck restraints
focus vision to peripheral, to tunnel, voice in the headset
vigilant eyes. Reflexes twitch, a thoroughbred in the gate,
cosmic traveler at launch. Visualize the track
like a slow slide show, hit each mark, seek straightaways,
carnival tilt of curves high and steep. Command
to fire engines, catch a gear, the pack rolls out,
yaws the nose to clean tires and scent the slippery
tail of air, slipstream of speed. Flag falls,
with throaty roar, high-pitched yowls, the pack lunges,
each driver alone with the track.

—Jane Hicks

Jane Hicks's poetry has been published widely in regional magazines and journals. Her poems have won numerous prizes. The Jesse Stuart Foundation of Ashland, Ky., published her first collection, *Blood and Bone Remember* in January 2005 (see a review of Hicks's book on page 41) This poem, says Hicks, was taken from a driver's response to her question: What do you think about when you're strapped in, just before the command to start engines?

ST. DALE:
The Missing Scene

by Sharyn McCrumb

Finished with the writing of St. Dale *and after the hardback was published, author Sharyn McCrumb realized that something was missing. This is a final scene she created to fill that gap. In her mind it should be inserted at the very end of the book, which has Harley Claymore, who had been the official guide on the Dale Earnhardt Memorial Bus Tour pilgrimage, walking toward a guard hut at Darlington, the last stop on the seven-track tour. Here's McCrumb's revised ending, printed with her permission. The book is reviewed on page 40.*

In the halo of the parking lot street light, Bekasu opened her purse and reached for her cell phone. Tucked in its case was the one souvenir she had bought on the No. 3 pilgrimage: a 1995 sports card photo of a young Winston Cup driver.

That first day she had found it among the homemade T-shirts and unauthorized fan items in a souvenir tent at the Bristol Motor Speedway. She'd bought it as a joke, really, an ironic gesture: pretend to get into the spirit of the tour but really have a private laugh at the sham heroics of it all. The card had only cost a dollar. At first it had amused her to see the absurdly dramatic photo, radiating sullen macho glamour.

Greg Vaughan

The Impersonator with a copy of *St. Dale* watches over Sharyn McCrumb as she works.

On the front of the card a driver in a blue and white fire suit glared into the camera, eyes shielded by dark glasses, mouth a tight-lipped slit, the planes of his face as smooth and perfect as polished steel. The expression was not angry. As the days passed, she'd be rummaging through her purse and catch a glimpse of that face on the card, and she'd find herself staring at it in puzzled fascination, thinking that he looked vulnerable… lost… despite all that power.

Behold the man. He was beautiful… dangerous… sexy. Like an archangel whose alien perfection was nonetheless captivating. You felt that you could not speak in that presence, … and yet… if only you could stand behind him, you'd be safe from *anything.* Six feet tall. Wise, commanding, fearless, powerful, inhumanly beautiful.

Except that the man on the sports card wasn't any of those things, really.

He was Harley Claymore.

It said so in gold foil letters stamped on the edge of the card. *Harley Claymore, Winston Cup Driver, 1995.* So this was the media image of their tour guide from his NASCAR days — little chicken hawk Harley Claymore, weather-beaten by sun and nicotine, brown hair silvering to gray, and smiling that possum grin of the eternal good old boy, past educating, past sophisticating, occasionally sober. The only power he radiated now was a coruscating unhappiness.

Bekasu took a deep breath. She hadn't felt this way in a long time. It was an Indian Summer of the heart.

Bekasu held the card up to the light. *Had he ever been this? This archangel of power and terrible beauty* — before The Fall, before he lost his ride — had he been *this?*

Nah.

It was the gloss of camera magic. All a trick of light, conjuring for the subject strength, wisdom, *height* — an image for the credulous fans who wanted to believe that larger than life heroes drove "stock" cars just like theirs in the Sunday races. None of that was true, but the fantasy was comforting. You *wanted* to believe it.

She wanted to believe it.

She thought of all the men in the periphery of her life — the Country Club acquaintances who turned up occasionally as dinner dates or bridge partners, all the stuffy old lawyers, the self-important medical types, the reedy accountants, and the portly stockbrokers — all of whom she forgot about as soon as a tedious evening in their company had ended…

And here was something else again. Something, she groped for a word… *primal. 180 miles per hour. Reflexes like a tiger. Courage bordering on idiocy. And the passionate intensity of one who lived entirely in the present — because to do otherwise would be to die out there.*

But what could you possibly talk about with him? *Oh, who wanted to* talk?

Bekasu took a deep breath. She hadn't felt this way in a long time. It was an Indian Summer of the heart — an unexpected rush of warmth that might last a day or a month, but it might never come again, and now that she had it, she didn't want to lose it.

The phone was ringing. What was Justine's room number again? — Oh, yes, *Ward Burton and Terry Labonte:* 225 — (This had been an educational week.)

"What do you mean you won't be coming back to the hotel?" Justine cradled the receiver between her shoulder and her ear. Nail polish still wet. "You're *where?"*

"Darlington. At the track," said Bekasu.

"Well, what are you doing back there? Did you lose your purse or what?"

"No." A long pause. "I came back with Harley."

There was a moment of silence while Bekasu tried to think of some way to explain something she didn't entirely understand herself, but Justine was way ahead of her. "You're taking off with Harley, aren't you, Bekasu?"

"Well, I guess I am, Justine, but don't worry — "

"Worry? Hell, yes, I'm worried. *Don't you hurt him, Bekasu!"*

"What?"

"You heard me. Harley. Don't you hurt him. I know exactly what's going on. — *Shut up, Cayle! I'm trying to talk here. Bekasu has finally found herself a wild boy — about twenty years late, as usual.* —Listen here, Bekasu, don't bother trying to explain this to me, because I know what's happening better than you do.

"Maybe he's no prince charming, but he's a good man, and he's been hurt about as bad as he can take. NASCAR chewed him up and spit him out. Don't you make it worse."

"After all these years of dating socially acceptable turnips, you have finally met a guy who's not a brain in a jar, who is — to put it in your jargon — in touch with his inner timber wolf, and now about a million years' worth of DNA is screaming for you to drag him right to the ground and get on with it."

"Justine!"

"And you're telling me not to worry! Damn right, I'm worried. About *him.* All week you've been looking at that sports card you bought at Bristol. I know because it fell out of your purse a time or two, and you sure were slow putting it back. You fell in love with a piece of *cardboard* and now you want Harley to be that guy."

"But he *is* that guy."

"Oh, he is not! Never was. That picture is a fairy tale on film — the male equivalent of an airbrushed *Playboy* centerfold, and you bought it!"

"Well, Justine, you're one to talk.

You've certainly dated your share of roughnecks over the years."

"Yeah, I did, and I loved every minute of it. But the difference is: those guys were my friends first. I didn't treat 'em like bags of catnip. — Look, Bekasu, all I'm saying is: *There's a person inside that fire suit.* Don't you *use* him. You're glad he has a body as well as a mind. I'm worried that he has a mind as well as a body."

Bekasu forced a laugh. "Do you want me to make an honest man of him?"

"He *is* an honest man. He's an old-style Cup driver. There's not a devious bone in his body. He makes million-dollar deals on a handshake, and he says what he means. All that irony and polite fiction crap of you so-called intellectuals is Martian to him. He's better than that. So you be straight with him because he'll trust you if it kills him."

"Harley?"

"Harley. Look, Bekasu, maybe he's no prince charming, but he's a good man, and he's been hurt about as bad as he can take. NASCAR chewed him up and spit him out. Don't you make it worse."

A little gasp and a pause at the other end of the phone. "All right, Justine," said Bekasu. "I'll — take care. I like him. I really do. — I have to go now. But thanks."

Justine slammed down the receiver. "Bekasu in a one-night stand." She sighed. "She has fallen in love with a *square of cardboard.* The real guy is not going to live up to that fantasy stud in her head, that's for sure."

Cayle looked up from her book. "I don't know," she said. "Maybe compared to all those boring desk jockeys she's had before, Harley will seem sexy and dangerous to her. But that's beside the point. I think something else is going to happen. I think Bekasu is going to find out that Harley actually needs her. Now Bekasu is one of nature's protectors. I'll bet she'll find out that she loves a guy who *needs* her more than she would have loved the macho stud she thought he was."

Justine scowled at one smudged pink fingernail. "Well, she'd just better not *hurt* him, that's all." N&T

New York Times Best-selling author Sharyn McCrumb has won many awards for her writing.

My Old Studebaker Pickup

Thing was, she was old when I got her,

always hard to start, groaning
and complaining,
the old flat-head,
when I pressed the starter,
a long time to warm up,
and if I ever got anywhere with her
she made it clear
that bouncing on a bed
of gravel with those worn ball joints
wasn't her idea of a good time.

Never a smooth ride.

And easy to overheat,
grew hot under the slightest load,
blew off steam
like a circus calliope.

No rack and pinion,
idler arm loose,
she never steered where I told her,
and once decided on a course
toward any precipice,
the old drum brakes, squealing
and grating, played hell stopping her.

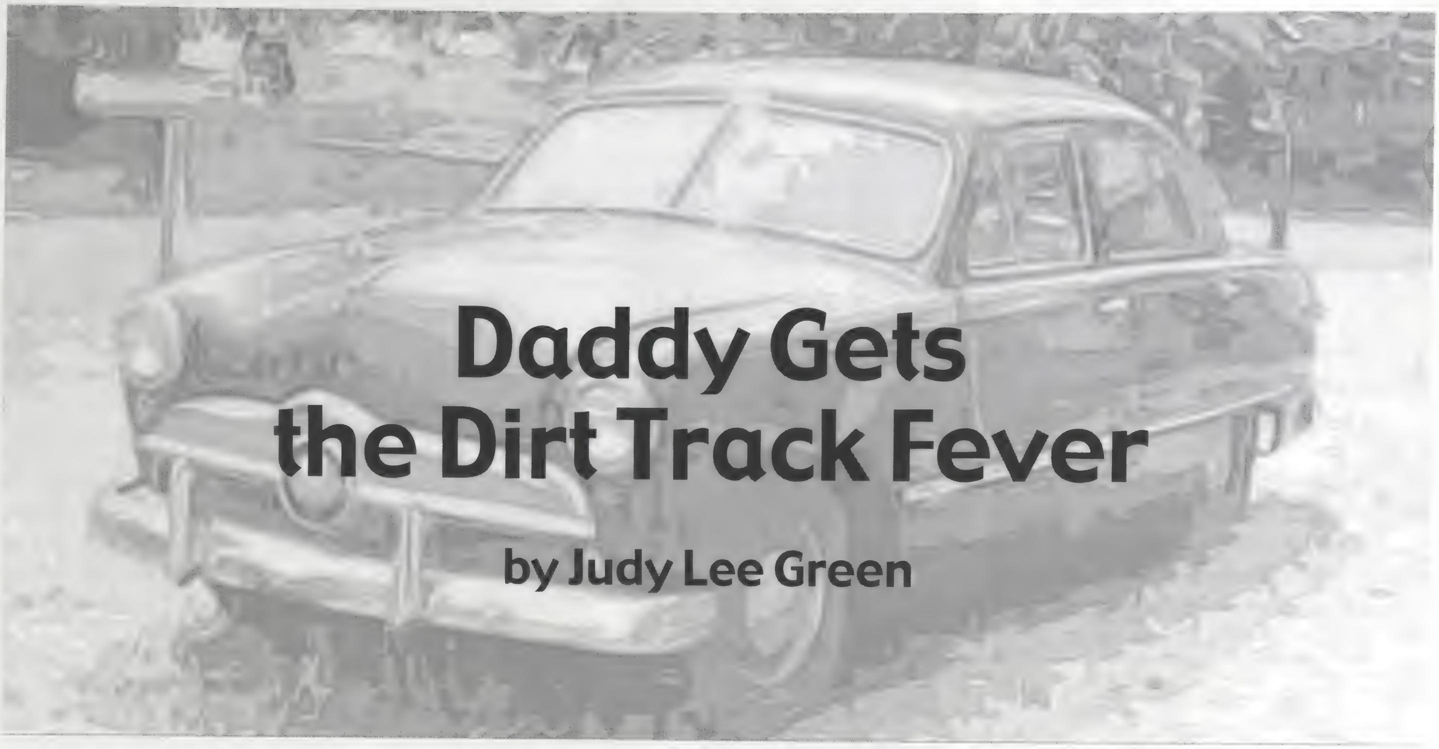
Once we went all the way
gearbox without synchronizers
to Cincinnati,
and every time I shifted
if not for double-clutch
she'd grind her teeth and kick.

That's why I traded
her in
on a sleek new model, white walls,
positraction rear end, Hydramatic transmission.

Every
Saturday night
you could find us at the Star-lite Drive-in.

— Charlie Hughes

Charlie Hughes lives on the highest point in Jessamine County, Ky. He owns Wind Publications, a small literary press, and is the former editor of *Wind Magazine.* Hughes is author of *Shifting for Myself,* a collection of poems. He also publishes the e-mail and online *Kentucky Literary Newsletter* (http://windpub.com/current.htm).



Daddy Gets the Dirt Track Fever

by Judy Lee Green

Original photo courtesy of D&J Auction Services, www.dnjauctions.com.

How a Chattanooga house builder became a child's hero on Friday nights running as No. 202.

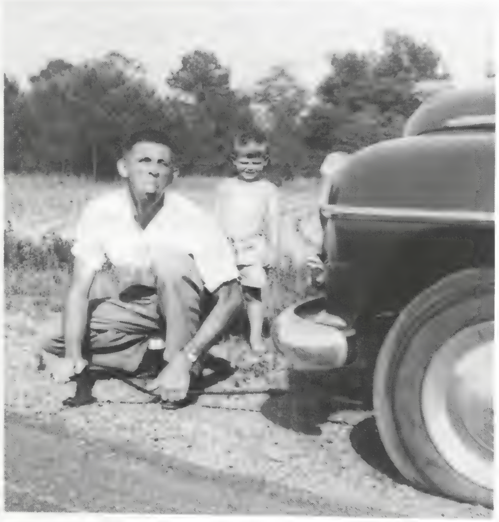
When I was a little girl in the 1950s living in Chattanooga, there were no Jiffy Lubes, no Midas Muffler Centers, no car care specialists. Gasoline sold for 29 to 33 cents a gallon, and gas wars between stations were not unusual. People patiently lined up for gasoline priced at four gallons for a dollar. Automotive work was done by mechanics at service stations where technicians in uniforms pumped gas, checked the oil, cleaned the windshield, and aired the tires for their customers.

But not for our car. My daddy was a carpenter by trade, but he did all the maintenance on our family vehicle. He was a shade-tree mechanic. With equal skill he could change the oil or rebuild the motor. He changed the air filter, the hoses, the windshield wipers. He replaced the belts, the points and plugs, set the timing, adjusted the brakes, greased the wheels, rotated the tires, fixed flats, changed the fuel pump, rebuilt the carburetor. He could pull and rebuild the engine. Our cars, over the years, were never taken to repair shops. My daddy kept them washed, cleaned, and well maintained.

And on Friday nights my daddy would load Mama and all of us kids into the car and take us to the stock car races. The nearest was Boyd's Speedway, a quarter-mile dirt track near the Tennessee/Georgia line, about five miles from where we lived. Boyd's ran modified stock cars, and each Friday night ended in a demolition derby in which anything was allowed. The races were loud. They were noisy. They were so much fun.

A tall privacy fence encircled the speedway. Crude wooden bleachers were stacked halfway around the track. The bleacher on the very top row looked like a shelf along the fence. It was our favorite place to sit. It was the highest location and had the best vantage point.

When something exciting happened, the entire crowd gasped and rose with one accord as though they were puppets and the puppeteer had pulled the master string. We kids could stand on the top row against the fence when everyone



Levida Lee

Candid camera: Edward A. "Ed" Lee changes a flat and mugs for the camera, sticking his tongue out at the photographer, his wife, Levida. Ronnie Lee is in the background.

stood up and never miss a thing. From here also we could see the tires as they came off the race cars and bounced into the bleachers, parting the crowd like Moses parted the Red Sea. Sometimes they rebounded with such force that they leaped over the wall behind us and disappeared out of sight.

The announcer began his carnival-like monologue while the fans were assembling and the race cars were arriving. The lights came on, and the bugs came out. The lineup was announced with the slower cars given the best starting positions, and the warm-up laps began.

Drivers revved their cars' engines faster and faster but held them back, too, like holding onto pit bulls at an illegal dogfight. When all the cars were bunched up and running, the green flag waved, the announcer screamed, "They're off," the crowd went wild.

The smell of exhaust fumes was tempered by the greasy smell of hamburgers, hot dogs, French fries, and hot buttered popcorn being sold along with hot chocolate, coffee, and Co-colas at the concession stand. Exhaust fans blew these intoxicating smells into the dirt bowl where we were sitting, but we never bought food at the races. With five of us kids, there were too many mouths to feed.

The races were loud.
They were noisy.
They were so much fun.

Those tantalizing smells, the blast of the amplification system, and the deafening roar of the race itself shook my little girl frame and sent my heart racing as fast as the cars. My ears rang. I literally quaked with the excitement. It felt as if I had swallowed a bunch of June bugs, and they lay on their backs deep within me, legs kicking, as I had seen them do on a hot sidewalk.

Courtesy of Judy Lee Green

The Lee family in the early 1950s: (from left) Judy; her mama, Levida, holding Dana; brother Ronnie; her daddy, Ed, holding Donna; and Gary, the oldest child.

Then in the mid-1950s my daddy caught race fever. It was not enough to go to the speedway each week and watch the races. He wanted *to build* a car. *He wanted to run.* It was a fever that persisted most of the decade, on till I was a teenager and dating.

Our next-door neighbor was Eddie Harmon, a driver for ET&WNC, East Tennessee and Western North Carolina trucking line, which all of us kids called Eat Taters and Wear No Clothes. He was a shade-tree mechanic, too, and he also loved the races. Together he and my daddy built a race car in our back yard from junkyard parts and dump site discoveries.

My daddy bought a dark blue '49 Ford for $40 from Billy Brown Clark, another neighbor, who was employed by the TVA but who did body work on wrecked cars on the side. Mama insisted that the Ford was not a used car but a used-up car.

Daddy found an A-frame from a child's swing set at the dump. The frame was bent almost in two, but he brought it home, straightened it out, and rigged up a pulley to it. Then he and Eddie pulled the motor from the used-up Ford and hoisted it on the A-frame. It looked like a 600-pound sow strung up at hog killing time.

They repaired, adjusted, modified, rebuilt, and tweaked the motor and all its components. They gutted the interior, removing the backseat, the side and back windows, the muffler, the tailpipe, and anything else that wasn't absolutely necessary to the running of the car. They did body work with a ball peen hammer. They installed roll bars around the inside frame with a welding torch. And last but not least, with white paint, they drew its identification on the doors, No. 202.

Mama would not go to Boyd's Speedway when Daddy raced. She worried that he would get hurt, or even kill himself. But that didn't keep us kids home. We sat on the top bleacher against the privacy fence and screamed for our daddy and No. 202. Eddie did not race but was always there in the pit as my daddy's crew chief.

Mama insisted that the Ford was not a used car but a used-up car.

Our favorite part of the evening was

the demolition derby after the feature. The drivers lined up as usual, all going in the same direction around the track, but as spin-outs, blow-outs and wrecks occurred, as mechanical problems developed, drivers were allowed to back up or cut across the infield or run in the wrong direction. They sideswiped and rammed and battered each other in order to disable their competition. The winner in this contest of speedway bumper cars was the last man in a running car on the track. Broken down vehicles, tires, fenders, bumpers, headlights, taillights, and grilles littered the track at night's end.

Although he placed occasionally, my daddy never won a race. That didn't seem to be his intent. The object of his racing was not necessarily to win but to run.

Each week after towing it home on Friday nights, Eddie and my daddy overhauled that Ford. Although he placed occasionally, my daddy never won a race. That didn't seem to be his intent. The object of his racing was not necessarily to win but to run.

For a young man with a wife, five little kids, a mortgage, monthly bills, and nothing stretched ahead of him as far as he could see but a lifetime of hard work, it was an escape, an acceptable way to run away from reality. So each Friday night he ran away from the work of building and framing, roofing and plumbing, digging foundations and setting windows. He drove round and round and round as fast as he could go on a quarter-mile dirt track in a souped-up '49 Ford at Boyd's Speedway, and us kids — we screamed and screamed for him and No. 202. N&T

Judy Lee Green now lives in Murfreesboro, Tenn., and is compiling a creative nonfiction work about her childhood in East Tennessee. Her work has been recognized by the Appalachian Writers Association, Tennessee Mountain Writers Inc., and The Alabama Writers' Conclave. Boyd's Speedway is the only dirt track she has ever been to.

The Oiled Road

Against her warnings we walked barefoot out
the long lane with its fine white gravel dust
to the county road, wet and black and freshly
oiled. I did it for the smell, the pasty
elastic feel of dark soil leavened
with the leavings of a hundred crankcases
drained into pans. The sharp odor of toil,
of gears hot from a day's plowing, baling,
a surface still malleable that led
to the unknown, forbidden houses, small
and unpainted in their sheltering trees
past our boundary. My sister and I
rolled drying oily blobs into blunt plugs,
tobacco-like, sweet toxin we'd secrete

in our jaws to gnaw away the tang, then
spit aside the used-up core. Nothing
seemed beyond ken or deadly then —
even the cottonmouth moccasins in weeds
at the lake's edge showed their white throat only
to sign the verge where *ours* turned to *theirs.*
Paradise clearly marked, this place whose rules
we never broke enough to be expelled,
held as we were there in grandparents' love,
whose patience far outlasted God's.

We played for years in our patch of sand
set at the foot of the cyclopean pump,
and breathed the leaden fumes that fueled
a dozen tractors, huge grain trucks with nothing
worse than purpled feet and legs to show
as the mulberry tree nearby dropped more
than the shade onto the sand. When we left
the oiled road, walked home for lunch,
our tarred feet put us in the tub. Stomachs
growling, we rubbed a stiff brush onto the floating
Ivory, scrubbed ourselves bright pink, 99 & 44/100% pure.

— Leatha Kendrick

Leatha Kendrick's poems have appeared or are forthcoming in numerous journals and anthologies. Other works include a documentary film about the life and work of Doris Ulmann, *A Lasting Thing for the World — The Photography of Doris Ulmann* (Little City Productions in 2002), and *Crossing Troublesome, Twenty-Five Years of the Appalachian Writers Workshop* (Wind, 2002), co-edited with George Ella Lyon. She has a master of fine arts degree from Vermont College and has received fellowships from the Kentucky Arts Council and the Kentucky Foundation for Women. She and her husband, Will, have raised three daughters on a small farm in the east Kentucky hills.

Magic Transports & Devil Rides

A GUY
WHO DRI VES
A CAR W DE OPEN
HE'S NOT THINK
HE'S JUST HO N'
Burma-Shave

For a young boy, a car delivers you from the routine, lets you stretch the limits and build new skills (some dubious), gives you your first taste of freedom — and danger.

by Danny Fulks

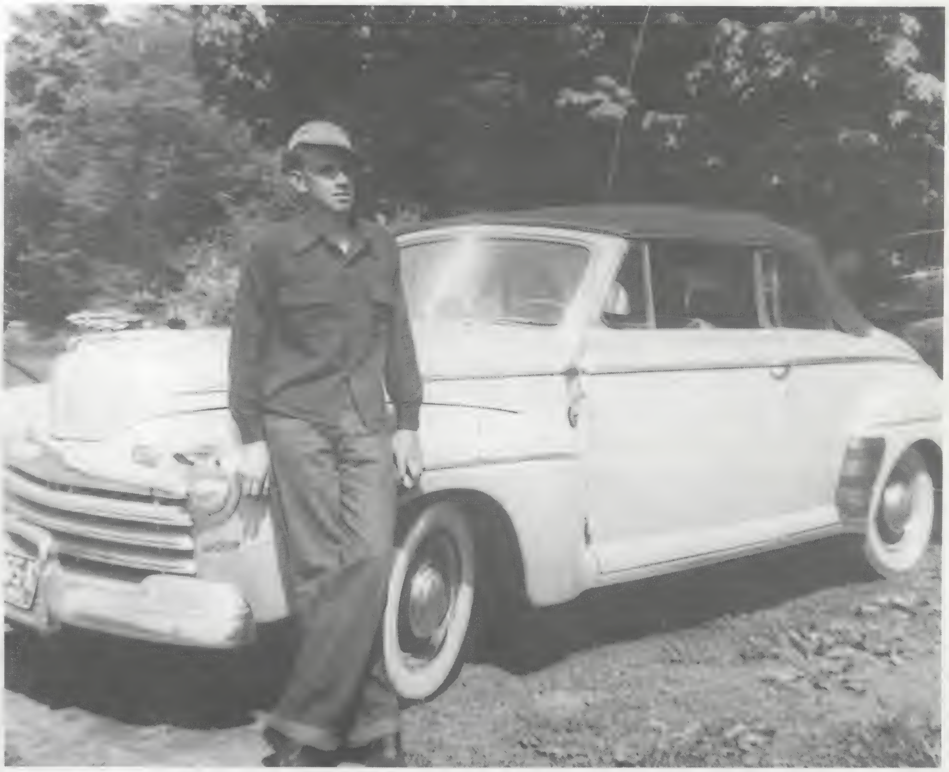
Cars. First came aromas: gasoline, exhaust fumes from busted mufflers seeping up through the floor boards, burning your eyes; rubber, hot radiators, molded upholstery, horse and mule feed, grease, cigarette smoke, chewing tobacco, Momma's powder, Brilliantine. The sights: leaking radiators, drained on zero nights, come morning filled up with creek water. Can't afford to put antifreeze in a leaking radiator.

Flat tire? Dig out the jack, peel the inner tube loose, find the leak, spread glue on the hole, light it with a match, blow it out, pry the tire back on with irons, pump it up with a hand pump, good to go. Dead battery? Push the car out of the driveway by hand, wave down a passing neighbor, get a shove. Park on a hill, coast to start until dad pulled in enough money to buy a new battery.

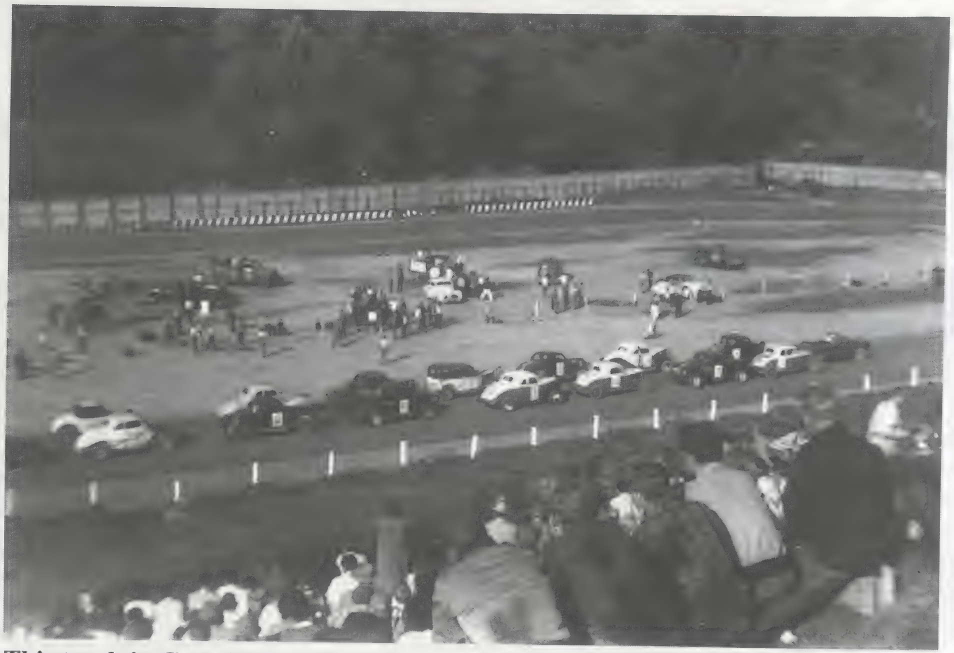
This was Scottown, Ohio, late 1940s.

At 3, we stood on the floor board, passenger side, clung to a dashboard groove, romped around in the backseat with friends, watched scary moons through the rear window riding home from night revival meetings at Old Baptist. We made crazy faces in shiny chrome hubcaps, Art Deco headlights; scribbled small words on dusty fenders. We ran our fingers over hood louvers, ran our feet, our hands along running boards, spare tire covers advertising Burger beer. We checked out cat scratches on the hood as dogs passed summer days asleep under the car.

Dad in his boater, Momma in her print dress took us to see relatives on summer


Danny Fulks Collection

Summer 1949. Freedom came in the form of a '46 light beige Ford V-8, flat-head that pulled down 100 horses with torque to spare. Flat-bellied kid in the picture? The author as a high school sophomore. The convertible belonged to a classmate.



Dale Holschuh Collection

This track in Coal Grove is one of many in Appalachian Ohio after World War II. Its bleachers were carved into the hillside; admission was a quarter. Drivers such as Gene Comstock made a name for themselves as speed demons, persons to beat. Comstock's father owned a Chevrolet dealership in Chesapeake, Ohio, and provided his son with cars and cash. Rules were simple: bring your car, mark it up with a number, pay the $10 fee. Whoever was ahead if all cars conked out won. Winners might get $100 or so. Races were held on Saturday and Sunday afternoons in several heats. There were no lights for night racing.

Sundays. Dust curled up on milkweed as the Ford V-8 bumped along, worn shocks banging, ashes from Dad's Camel popping against our faces. Gears ground, scraping mean in the shift from first to second; harmless hitchhikers rode running boards. Bye-bye. Adventures ahead. Milk check came on time, Dad took us to town Saturdays. Mail Pouch barns, two-lane blacktops, Burma-Shave signs, billboards for Atlas tires, the Twilight Motel, vacancy sign lit.

Took the bridge across the Ohio to Huntington, W. Va., safer than the ferry, dime toll. Johnny Mack Brown on the silver screen, ice cream at the drugstore, new pair of school shoes. For a day, we left behind the gravel road a mile from the mailbox where we went for days hoping we might see a hawk on the wing or see Momma kill a black snake (throw it over a clothesline, bring rain).

At 10, learned to drive, little bit at a time; sat on Dad's lap, worked the steering wheel, sat with the car running in the driveway, got a feel for the clutch: floor shift knob—a faded white die, snake-eyes on top. At 15, a learner's permit gave us legal status; Dad on board for the ride. We cheated, slipped out on our own, picked up some friends, headed down to Coal Grove, saw Gene Comstock's dirt track where men raced stock cars Saturday and Sunday afternoons in summer. Pre-war cars like 1940 Mercurys mixed it up with new makes and models. Barnstorming heats brought in crowds; engines revved, dust swirled, women fainted.

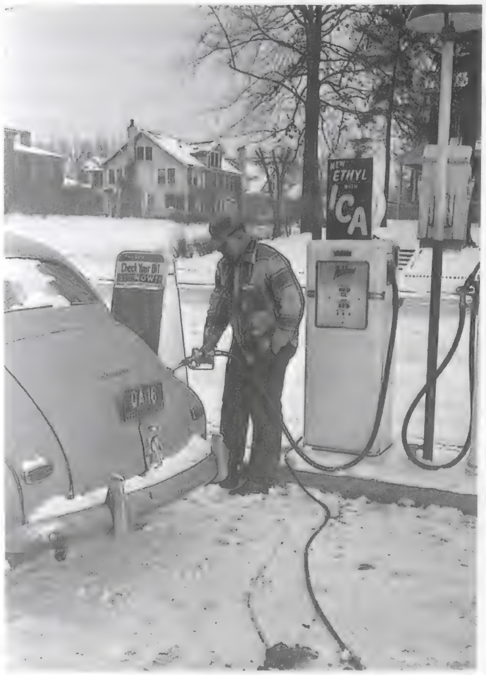
Saw Joie Chitwood's Hell Drivers do a show at the Lawrence County fair. Drivers from California ran the newest models on two wheels, crisscrossed within inches of bumpers speeding in front of the grandstand. Loudspeakers brought an excited voice as a car with a man spread-eagle on the hood ran through burning plywood. Men in white suits rushed to the scene. Will he make it out alive? Local promoters put on demolition derbies, junk cars smashing into one another, show over when one car was left standing.

We saved money (earned $4 a day in the tobacco fields) to buy the latest kitsch, to decorate the Ford, make it stand out. Mudflaps, blue point tail lights, fancy hood ornament, gutted muffler, steering wheel spinner, tin headlight visors, squirrel tails, seat covers hooked on with hog rings. One kid had the ultimate: a Continental kit on the rear, fake wire wheel covers. No big cars traveled Williams Creek road. Then Lash LaRue brings his western show to town. His wheels? A Lincoln Continental coupe, California tags.

We hadn't heard about moonshine running in Southern Appalachia, men in cars loaded down with white whiskey, running from the law in souped-up V-8s, four-barrel Holley carburetors sucking gas. We had our own moonshine, bootleg spirits, and our cars would run, too. Be sure to unhook the odometer, tell Dad we're only going into Crown City, that's it, won't take a dollar's worth of gas. Learned how to spin our cars into a one-eighty, easy on gravel roads, who's gonna know? Whip the steering wheel sharp left, brake enough to get the rear wheels on grassy berm, floor it, head off in the opposite direction, no problem. Straighten out curves, let rear wheels break adhesion from the asphalt, steer the same direction as the slide.

Ohio Route 7 with straight stretches up to half-a-mile, place to blow the carbon out of the car's exhaust, get it to 90 or more. Drag racing late at night. Take the signal, drop the clutch, burn rubber in first for sure, maybe on the shift to second. Graveyards, roadside parks, red clay turnarounds on lonesome ridges, Gobblers Knob, good places to park. Hung out with girls who joined us in cars at the sound of a horn in front of their houses; parked, radio on, lights from the dashboard shining on hard, naked legs, the Delmore Brothers singing "Blues Stay Away From Me." We were taken in by something in our awkwardness; maybe not love, but it would do

The Happy Corner in Gallipolis sold draft beer in gallon jugs for a buck. Drink it fast, get the buzz before it gets hot. Fat Watts ran a beer joint in Crown City. Send in the oldest-looking boy in the group, get a couple six-packs of Miller



Briggs Lawrence County Library, Ironton, Ohio

Ironton, Ohio, winter 1953. Gassing up the Chevy at an Ashland Oil station. *New Ethel with ICA* (Ignition Combustion Additive) enhanced performance. Oil checked, windshield cleaned, no extra charge.

High Life, ice cold. A friend and I were riding in the early morning fog hoping to get home before daylight, sober up. State trooper pulled in behind us, black and white, lights blinking. Me at the wheel, checked out the deal, let your friend drive, go on home. Like he was sober.

Guy we knew, Jess Moore, owned a beer joint outside Crown City, roadhouse with a Seeburg—bubbles running through yellow tubes. Play Hank Snow's "I'm Moving On" again, I'll buy this round. Jess had a new Studebaker Golden Hawk, sharpest car around, big V-8. Asked us if we'd like to check it out, run up to Gallipolis.

Johnny Swindler drove, me and two other guys along for the ride. A few miles up the road, Johnny showed us his one-eighty move. The Hawk stuck to the dry concrete, headed straight into a ditch, left pieces of ironweed stuck behind the grille. No one hurt much, we shoved the car back in the road, went on to town, danced, drank at the Blue Willow, got back to Crown City about four in the morning. Left Johnny passed out in the car at Jess's, headed home, almost daylight. Still don't know how Jess took it. He's dead now, anyway.

Larry Owens's family owned a new Kaiser. When Larry took it out, mothers rushed children inside their houses, farmers jumped ditches with teams of horses. Larry would run the Kaiser up to 100 miles an hour on Route 7, swaying lane to lane. Near graduation our senior year, an aura of sadness descended one morning. Larry, driving, drinking, let the car drift off the road to the right on a long, gradual curve into a ditch on its side. He fell across the seat into the passenger door, knocked it open, fell out, was dragged along till the car stopped. He died.

We went into town the next day, found the garage where the car was, looked it over as we had other wrecks, the places where they happened. The Kaiser wasn't damaged much—a few scrapes, door sprung open. Other wrecks we'd seen, broken glass, blood, shoes left empty, thoughts of the terror of those milliseconds when a driver knew he was about to be slammed into the steering wheel, dash knobs, engine pushing back into the passenger area.

A few days later, ready to drag again, lay some rubber. Thoughts of Mommas' sleepless nights, prayers came. But beer, gas, good times—that's what we lived for. At a school assembly the principal tells us to stop using up our dads' rubber, says he's tired of seeing black streaks on the athletic field. Get caught, you will be suspended. The warning doesn't faze us. We giggle, play grab-ass, think of a billboard on Route 218 near Gallipolis: shows a fretting woman by a wrecked car, big letters note "Goodyear rubber could have prevented this." John passes around a little cartoon booklet showing a pregnant girl, big belly, same caption as the one on the billboard.

Danny Fulks is from Huntington, W. Va. He is professor emeritus at Marshall University and an adjunct at Ohio University, Ironton campus. His latest collection, *Tragedy on Greasy Ridge,* was published in 2003. This is his fourth contribution to *Now & Then.*

A Man and His Cars

Editor's Query: So what was your first car and what do you drive these days?

Danny Fulks: I drove a variety of Fords and Chevies over the years, throw in a Pinto, a Volkswagen Bug.

In 2000, I bought a 3-Series BMW Sports Sedan, low-profile tires. I went back home at times, drove Ohio 7, essentially unchanged in location since the Cherokees laid out the trail a couple millennia ago. You could pull down 110 easy on the straight stretch above Crown City, same as 50 years ago. The Bimmer ran good through Waterloo on Ohio State Route 217, crooked as a dog's hind leg, like roads in Bavaria. Clung to the blacktop like Velcro.

So the grandchildren (five of them, ages 4 to 12) complained about space. Got a Ford SUV, V-8, gas guzzler. Each rider has personal air/heat ducts, power outlets, cup holders, DVD, headsets, storage compartments, Game Boys. Great ride to Myrtle Beach, background music of Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles CDs for 10 hours, interrupted once in a while by a fight.

Ah, quiet ride, smooth ride, even joy ride redefined.

Danny Fulks Collection

The author drove his dad's 1941 Chevrolet Super Deluxe coupe. The fender skirts and wheel rims were dress-up items and gave the car a lower-looking profile.

St. Dale: A Novel

by Sharyn McCrumb

Kensington Publishing
New York, N.Y. - 2005
$25 (hardcover), 311 pages

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
SHARYN McCRUMB
3
ST. DALE
A NOVEL

Any traveler may be called a *pilgrim,* and any trip a *pilgrimage,* but as her "Author's Note" to *St. Dale* makes clear, Sharyn McCrumb intends the journey of her 13 characters on the Dale Earnhardt Memorial Bus Tour to be taken seriously as a sacred experience. Her note describes the novel as "a book on the canonization of a secular figure—a *Canterbury Tales* with a modern saint." By some mysterious process, the secular has been raised to the level of the sacred. The pilgrims' crooked path from Bristol Motor Speedway to Martinsville to Rockingham to Lowe's/Concord to Talladega to Atlanta to Daytona is invested with just as much significance as the road to Canterbury or Rome or Jerusalem.

Part of the fun is the way McCrumb has embedded Chaucerian names among her characters. Such a borrowing of names was easy because it was during the 14th century that many common English surnames based on vocations came into being. Chaucer's knight, for example, becomes the Rev. Bill Knight from Canterbury, *New Hampshire.* The reeve, in medieval times superintendent of a large farm, becomes Ray Reeves, whose vocation is agribusiness. Just as Chaucer's franklin was prominent in his county, Jesse Franklin is a county auditor. Young Terry Palmer has a surname recalling medieval pilgrims who carried palm branches to denote a visit to the Holy Land.

Lovers of Chaucer demand a vivacious Wife of Bath and are not disappointed. In *St. Dale,* she appears as Justine, married three times to the Wife's five, and in the opinion of Harley Claymore, the official tour guide, she "practically hits you over the head with pheromones." Harley has been hired by Harry Bailey, CEO of Bailey Tours—another name straight from Chaucer: his host of the Tabard Inn.

Where, the reader soon wonders, are the rascals who added spice to Chaucer's group? The bus driver, who bears the unsavory name Ratty Lane, is likely as raucous as Chaucer's miller, but he tells no bawdy tale. However, like the miller, he always leads the pilgrims out of town by virtue of being the driver. The true rascals do appear when the tour has barely begun. A "burly, bearded man with a leather vest over his black T-shirt" crashes the party. Joining him is "a small weaselly man" reeking of garlic who is never named.

Alert readers will recognize Cannon, the burly fellow, as Chaucer's pardoner, keen on canon law, and the weasel as Chaucer's summoner who loved garlic, onions, and leeks. The weasel informs the pilgrims that Cannon collects debris from wrecks on the NASCAR tracks and sells it to race fans. "It's like turning scrap metal into gold, the prices folks'll pay for Speedway trash," he says. Like Chaucer's pardoner, Cannon deals in fake relics. Another clue to the weasel's identity comes when Harley "couldn't *summon* the energy to argue the matter" of selling such debris. With cell phones in hand, these pilgrims, though, are too smart for the hucksters and ready to call the authorities.

The delightful mingling of 21st-century savvy with 14th-century piety makes for interesting reading. *St. Dale* is primarily a novel of character, not of plot. Readers may thrill, for instance, to Harley's memories of an adolescent drag race, but it's what the memories reveal about Harley the man, a NASCAR has-been intent on proving his worth despite a reputation of incompetence and drunkenness, that matters. It is the pilgrims who are captivating.

Many years ago, Dr. Samuel Johnson created a sage who said, "Long journeys in search of truth are not commanded. Truth, such as is necessary to the regulation of life, is always found where it is honestly sought." McCrumb is too good a storyteller to be blatant about such a thing, but her pilgrims do find new truths about themselves. As proof, she titles her final chapter "Checking Out," defined as "what NASCAR drivers say when they're making a burst of speed to leave the rest of the field back in the dust."

By virtue of their pilgrimage, the travelers on the bus are "checking out" toward a transformed future. As the pilgrims are dispersed, a mysterious figure who looks a lot like Dale Earnhardt meets Harley in a dim hospital parking lot and tells him, *"Believing is seeing.* But, hey, blessed are they who don't believe and yet still see." Whether Chaucer's pilgrims received a similar benediction is unknown. McCrumb's pilgrims have found a race track to a new devotion and the checkered flag is out. They are all winners.

—Parks Lanier

Parks Lanier has been part of the Highland Summer Conference at Radford University since 1978, now as producer of archival videotapes of such visiting writers as Sharyn McCrumb.

Gold Thunder: Autobiography of a NASCAR Champion

by Rex White as told to Anne B. Jones

McFarland & Company, Inc.
Jefferson, N.C. - 2005
$39.95 (hardcover), 224 pages

GOLD THUNDER
Autobiography of a NASCAR Champion
Rex White
as told to ANNE B. JONES

Once upon a time stock car racing was a passion, not a profession. Drivers scrounged for parts and built their own cars, worked day jobs to support the addiction and served as their own pit crews at the track. *Gold Thunder,* Rex White's exuberant memoir co-written with Anne Jones, is a fast-paced history of his career in those pioneer days of NASCAR.

White provides a matter-of-fact account of his harsh childhood in Taylorsville, N.C., without complaint or self-pity. His battle with polio at age 11 gets a passing mention and is summed up by White's enduring optimism: "I felt lucky to only be crippled and fortunate to be alive." That positive attitude, along with a father who demanded perfection from his children plus the arduous work and long hours necessary to sustain a family farm, gave White the qualities and work ethic he would need to become not just a champion but one of NASCAR's Top 50 Greatest Drivers.

A fascination with all things mechanical coupled with a lifelong love for speed made it inevitable that White would eventually be drawn into racing. It was on the farm that he first became acquainted with automobiles, teaching himself to repair cars — including the family's Model T. He improvised tools and replacement parts when necessary, and White later made good use of the creative innovations implemented by his 'shine-hauling neighbors who modified their cars to carry heavy loads, increase speed, and negotiate treacherous mountain roads while evading revenuers.

White's entry into the ranks of the champions began when he insinuated himself into the pits at West Lanham Speedway in Maryland. Volunteering to help driver Frankie Schneider, White eventually took the wheel of one of Schneider's cars and finished fourth in a four-car race. With his usual optimism, White notes, "I wasn't racing, I was just hanging in there… It only served to whet my appetite."

White is generous with praise for colleagues and rivals such as Lee and Richard Petty, Junior Johnson, Fireball Roberts, and Ned Jarrett. For readers who don't care about carburetors and toe-in, there's a plethora of fast-paced anecdotes about the personalities of the sport: Gober Sosebee's use of cow manure to plug a hole in his radiator (he went on to win the race); the resurrection of Joe Caspolich after he'd been pronounced dead; Herman Beam's habit of finishing last in every race — on purpose; and Ned Jarrett's pre-race ritual of seeking out highways numbered 11. White also pays tribute to Louise Smith, the First Lady of Racing, and to Sara Christian, the only woman ever to earn a top five finish in NASCAR.

White's respect and affection for his colleagues extends also to the fans who kept the sport alive. Especially true in the early days when fans might jump in to help upright an overturned car or take up a collection to pay a driver's fine, White calls the fans "the most important part of racing."

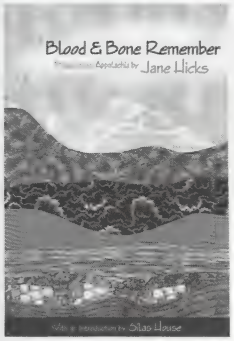
Together Rex White and Anne Jones have crafted a treasure for fans, a vicarious lap around the era with a NASCAR legend at the wheel. Loaded with reminiscences, *Gold Thunder* is a fine balance between racing history and portraits of the colorful characters who populated the tracks, enveloping the reader in atmosphere as thick as the dust on a North Carolina dirt track.

— Deborah Adams

Deborah Adams is a Tennessee author and NASCAR dilettante. She drives a cute little red 4-cylinder.

Blood and Bone Remember: Poems from Appalachia
by Jane Hicks

Jesse Stuart Foundation
Ashland, Ky. - 2005
$10 (paperback), 78 pages



In Jane Hicks's poem "Double Wedding Ring," a quilt is built from squares of old dresses, as a life is constructed from thousands of individual moments, snapshots in time. Like one of Hicks's own celebrated quilts, this debut poetry collection has been hand-assembled with skill and precision, each poem a piece of art built from the "patches, pieces, remnants, remains" of her life, her land, and her heritage. Together, the poems of *Blood and Bone Remember* unfold in a spell-binding pattern of remembrance, reconciliation, reverence, and joy.

Invoking the power of personal connection to the land is almost cliché in Appalachian poetry, but Hicks's poem "Ancestral Home" explains that fierce attachment with startling clarity and detail. She opens with a powerful declaration of shared memory and consciousness: "Blood and bone remember/surely as nerve and neuron" and writes from a place of "ghost pain" and "elemental reckoning," where nature brings terrible beauty and grief, both equally sharp and sweet, with no room for the sentimentally bucolic.

Hicks employs this unflinching technique throughout her collection, including the slow simmer of the threat of violence alongside poignant memories of family and rural life. In the foreword, novelist Silas House notes how Hicks portrays Appalachia as "a real place, burdened with neither romanticism or utter despair," and that is the power of a poem like "Raising the Nap," which compares a dried pod plant to an abusive father, rendering both tragic figures useful in their own ways, both in spite of and due to their "early beauty casually spent."

Hicks brings unexpected imagery to familiar tableaux, with a line of wimpled nuns serenading the Cumberland Falls moonbow and a furtive book sidled into a bucket of huckleberries like a love note. And when she turns inward, Hicks does so with a delightful sense of humor. Her beloved alter ego, the Cosmic Possum, stands as a scrappy symbol of a people in transition. Of all the native species, the possum is seen by most as an ugly nuisance, but Hicks reclaims the weird little beast as an intrepid mascot of suburban Appalachian Baby Boomers, "caught between Country Club and 4-H." This is a side of Appalachia often ignored in favor of historical or nostalgic accounts of the way things used to be, and Hicks bravely embraces the contradictions of a complex and rich contemporary life.

The familiar scene of Charismatic/Pentecostal worshippers speaking in tongues is turned on its head as the Cosmic Possum encounters glossolalia and xenolalia at a poetry slam, with poets "baptized in the spirit of verse." What begins with a wickedly funny image of an Appalachian poet hiding "behind every fence post" ends with an exuberant endorsement of accidental spiritual encounter, experienced while "misery, like kudzu, twined up the rafters." Hicks practices her wit with self-awareness and compassion, giving all Cosmic Possums a dignity and a voice.

This generosity of language runs throughout the collection, from families bound to coal mines in the Diamond

Jenny poems to her Daughters of Necessity, three women inspired by the mythical Fates who embody a feminist view of Appalachia that has no room for helpless victims. In Hicks's poems, a coal mine is a seductive lover, and boys covered in river sludge are:

> slick, shiny, and black
> like seals —
> floundering, bobbing among
> black, torrent-tumbled boulders.

Even dangerous mines and dust-coated children become beautiful, as much of a cherished landscape as majestic mountains and clear-running creeks.

Hicks's deft imagery and precise diction allow us to see through her eyes, to experience that moment of transformation ourselves. *Blood and Bone Remember* is an important addition to both Appalachian literature and new American letters, for its fierce grace, urgent authenticity, and utter fearlessness. Hicks has pieced together, from the saved scraps of a place and its people, a bold, vibrant patchwork of stories told in a voice that never relinquishes its authority — free of sentimentality but always full of stunning sentiment.

— Erin Keane

Erin Keane lives, works, and writes in Louisville. A poetry graduate of the Spalding University MFA in Writing Program, she co-directs the InKY Reading Series and teaches interdisciplinary studies at Bellarmine University.

Books In Brief

Bristol Motor Speedway: 40 Years of Thunder, by Benny Phillips (Charlotte, N.C.: UMI Publications, 2001; $24.95 hardcover).

Bristol Motor Speedway, the world's fastest half-mile concrete oval, is the undisputed "tough little track" of all NASCAR-sanctioned tracks. Motorsports journalist Benny Phillips begins his book with the building of the speedway on a dairy farm in Bristol, Tenn., in 1961, amid local opposition and works his way through 40 years of racing. Engaging photographs and a synopsis of each year's spring and August race help bring this book to life.

Dirt Tracks to Glory: The Early Days of Stock Car Racing as Told by the Participants, edited by Sylvia Wilkinson (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Algonquin Books, 1983; out of print, but available from used book vendors).

Collected by novelist Sylvia Wilkinson, these oral histories of the drivers who started stock car racing is a must-have for the collector. Pioneers such as Bill France Sr., Banjo Matthews, Tim Flock, Ned Jarrett, and Wendell Scott provide captivating tales of their involvement with stock car racing from "dirt tracks to glory."

For the Love of NASCAR: An A-to-Z Primer for NASCAR Fans of All Ages, by Michael Fresina, illustrated by Mark Anderson (Chicago: Triumph Books, 2005; $16.95 hardcover).

NASCAR writer Michael Fresina provides the verses to a colorful collection of drawings organized alphabetically. Each letter coincides with a NASCAR icon. This is a fun book appropriate for any age reader.

Full Throttle
The Life and Fast Times of NASCAR Legend
CURTIS TURNER
Robert Edelstein

Full Throttle: The Life and Fast Times of NASCAR Legend Curtis Turner, by Robert Edelstein (New York: The Overlook Press, 2005; $24.95 hardcover).

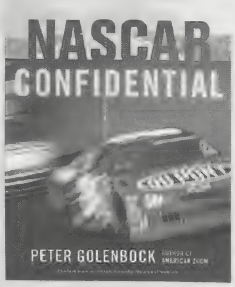
One of the early heroes of NASCAR, Curtis Turner honed his speedy driving skills as a moonshine hauler in the mountains of Virginia while a teenager. Known as the "Babe Ruth of Stock Car Racing," he won more than 350 races, including 25 NASCAR events in 1956 alone. His parties and ways with money were nearly as legendary as his impressive driving career. Robert Edelstein is the exclusive motorsports writer for *TV Guide,* and his biography of NASCAR great Curtis Turner is grounded in appealing writing and solid research.

Killer Curves, by Roxanne St. Claire (New York: Pocket Books, 2005; $6.99 paperback).

For the fan who likes to read in the stands: Popular Romance writer Roxanne St. Claire sets her latest novel in the colorful world of NASCAR, and you don't necessarily have to know a lot about stock car racing to go for this sexy, suspenseful story about a NASCAR owner and his estranged daughter and the devoted driver who brings them together.

NASCAR Chronicle, by Greg Fielden (Lincolnwood, Ill.: Publications International, 2003; $50 hardcover).

Award-winning racing historian Greg Fielden and the auto editors of *Consumer Guide,* track a colorful, year-by-year account of NASCAR's evolution. This comprehensive book includes thousands of photographs from the NASCAR archives, behind-the-scenes stories, and an appendix listing the winners of every race in NASCAR Winston Cup history.

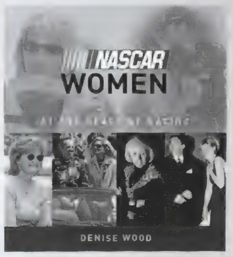


NASCAR Confidential: Stories of the Men and Women Who Made Stock Car Racing Great, by Peter Golenbock (St. Paul, Minn.: Motorbooks International, 2004; $24.95 hardcover).

Lively writing and little-known stories characterize this collection of interviews from famed sports writer Peter Golenbock. The third in a series of stock car racing books (*American Zoom,* 1993, and *The Last Lap,* 1998), *NASCAR Confidential* features the narratives of drivers, announcers, pit crews, owners, and fans.

NASCAR Off the Record, by Brock Yates (St. Paul, Minn.: Motorbooks International, 2004; $24.95 hardcover).

Brock Yates, respected journalist and television reporter, provides a comprehensive history of the transformation of NASCAR from a rural pastime into a colossal corporation. Combining new essays with classic columns from *Car and Driver,* Yates's observations on NASCAR span nearly 50 years.



NASCAR Women: At the Heart of Racing, by Denise Wood (Phoenix: David Bull Publishing, 2003; $24.95 paperback).

Racing journalist and public relations specialist Denise Wood chronicles the roles of 13 women in the NASCAR organization. Wives, drivers, reporters, executives, and team owners are profiled in a sport overwhelmingly dominated by men.

Silent Thunder: Breaking through Cultural, Racial, and Class Barriers in Motorsports, by Leonard W. Miller (Trenton, N.J.: Red Sea Press, 2004; $19.95 paperback).

Leonard Miller had a long career as a manager and owner of African-American racing teams and is considered by many to be the expert regarding motorsports and African Americans. His memoir of his experiences with racism in one of America's most beloved sports is an engaging read that commemorates bravery and resourcefulness while offering hope for change.

SUNDAY MONEY
Jeff MacGregor
SPEED! LUST! MADNESS! DEATH!
A HOT LAP AROUND AMERICA

Sunday Money: Speed! Lust! Madness! Death! A Hot Lap Around America with NASCAR, by Jeff MacGregor (New York: HarperCollins, 2005; $25.95 hardcover).

Sports Illustrated contributor Jeff MacGregor and his wife, Olya Evanitsky, an award-winning photographer, drove 48,000 miles in a small RV to cover the entire 2002 season on the NASCAR circuit—36 races at 23 tracks in 18 states. His substantial narrative combines sports writing with history, memoir, and detailed feature writing and is a highly recommended documentary account of America's noisiest sport.

Although not yet available, a collector's edition DVD called *American Stock* is promised soon from filmmaker John W. Warner IV and Stonebridge Productions. Three documentary films on stock car racing will be included in the set: *The Wendell Scott Story, The Curtis Turner Story,* and *The Golden Era of NASCAR.* Check this website for updates: http://www.stonebridgefarmpro.com/pages/635374/.

—Marianne Worthington

Marianne Worthington is reviews editor for *Now & Then.* Her academic dean at Cumberland College, Don Good, who is a stock car racing enthusiast and a NASCAR aficionado, assisted with this roundup by providing resources and suggestions for sorting out the thousands of books on stock car racing. His overview of racing history in Appalachia is on page 3.

The Races

This is how you become a woman,
is what she could have said,
though it had nothing to do
with rouge or stockings,
back seats or babies.

Grandma drove in the stock
car race,
the one-time-only
powder-puff race
where women had a chance
to enter into the thing,
engines screeching,
dust soaring;
until things went all wrong,
centrifugal forces
and the direction of the track
somehow not meeting in the middle.

The vehicle took flight;
did not: spread wings, arc
into the setting sun,
adjust its angle to catch the light
as it turned and flipped,
skidded and shuddered through dampened dust,
past the crowd, the girl watching,
who would later tell the story
but at that time began to run,
peanuts flying as she kicked up heel,
ran, ran, ran,
even as Grandma emerged
from the wreckage, triumphant,
her lipstick dark in black and white,
her smile gorgeous
as she took off her helmet
and shook out her hair,
the winner.

—Hannah Marie Ekberg

Hannah Marie Ekberg grew up partly in the hills of West Virginia, where her mother was born, and partly in Illinois. She was particularly inspired to write this poem, to capture these specific images with words, after her Grandmother's house was broken into. The thieves took everything, including the old shoe boxes of photographs.

Let's Cut to the Chase: Cut the Chases

by Frank Deford

Like most little boys, what I hated in movies was when the story would just stop and there would be a lot of mushy kissing. Now that I'm a big boy, what I hate is car chases. Can't they put anything else in movies but car chases? And they're so ridiculous. Even in movies that are reasonably true to life, the car chases are unbelievable. Cars fly through the air, they ricochet, they screech through alleys going 100 miles an hour. Sometimes they even zip the wrong way down highways. And, of course, the hero driving the chased car never gets caught — or even gets hurt.

Car chases are to dramas like songs are to musicals. You have to suspend belief when people break into song in the *middle* of a street, just as you have to suspend belief when cars chase each other *down* the street.

Okay, okay, I know. What's this got to do with sports? Plenty.

You see, I'm convinced that there is a direct correlation between the number of stupid car chases in movies and the popularity of NASCAR. What is NASCAR, after all, but an organized car chase?

It's subliminal. NASCAR did not start to spread out of Dixie until people all over this great nation of ours started seeing car chases every time they went to the movies. And as well you know now, NASCAR is the fastest growing sport in America.

The Daytona 500, which opens the NASCAR season, is celebrated as one of the four prestige television events for the sweeps month of February: the Super Bowl, the Grammys, the Oscars, and the Daytona 500. This sounds like platinum, champagne, satin, and turnips.

How did this happen?

Car chases in the movies.

Actually there are two very different sports that drive tried-and-true American sports fans of a certain age plumb crazy: soccer and NASCAR. What *are* these bizarre intruders soiling our traditional sports landscape? Who are these strange people who actually *like* these sports? There's even a website, soccersucks.org. Soccer critics see the so-called "beautiful game" as all too foreign, maybe even subversive, probably sissy. Soccer *moms,* for heaven's sake. Hey, real football players never needed any mommies.

Interestingly, NASCAR is the inverse. Far from being the Episcopalian of sport, it's perceived as tacky and common. Hey, all the right sports — baseball, football, basketball, hockey, golf, tennis — started in the *North*east. Now, look at the hollers NASCAR crawled out from. A *real* sport is supposed to smell of sweat, not exhaust fumes. And the folks who most hold their noses at NASCAR are convinced that the only reason people go to the races is to see cars crash.

No, no. Don't you get it? It's to see cars chase. Sure, cars chase better in the movies, but at NASCAR, you can scratch and scream and drink beer as you watch cars chase round and round and round and round and round and round and round and…

Frank Deford is senior contributing writer at *Sports Illustrated* as well as a regular commentator on National Public Radio and *RealSports with Bryant Gumbel.* He has written 14 books, including *The Old Ball Game,* about baseball at the turn of the century. He currently lives in Connecticut.

This piece was prompted by the 2005 Daytona 500 and the millions who watch that season-opening event for the NASCAR Nextel Cup. Reprinted with permission.

Repair

The timing is off in the Country Sedan
station wagon. Dad is out of his white shirt
and into his blue coveralls and cap.
He says I'll have to hold the light
because it's fall and dark after supper.
It's cold, my breath like the exhaust
from the tailpipe when he cranks the car.
The light is the one with the long yellow cord
that says, "Heavy Duty."
The bulb is caught in a trap,
a tin shield on one side

But the light is burning in my arms now.
They throb with it. It's draining into me
and that's why he can't see.
My hands and forearms are warm because the light
is seeping into them. The yellow light of the hawk's eyes
inside my forearms is turning red,
the red you see when you close your eyes
after looking directly into a right bare bulb.
This is why my father can't see.
We can't hold this light.

—**Michael Chitwood**

Michael Chitwood's work has appeared in *Poetry, The Threepenny Review, The Georgia Review, The New Republic,* and other journals. A new book is forthcoming from Louisiana State University Press.

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"When people ask me about Appalachian life and lore, ***Now & Then*** is the first periodical I direct them to. It brings a feeling of mountain life and people that is irreplaceable, matched in no other publication, Appalachian or otherwise. ***Now & Th*** is always a welcome presence in our house."

Fred Chapp

"***Now & Then*** keeps me in touch and informed, a is a must for anyone interested in the past, presen and future of the region."

Robert Morg

Repair

The timing is off in the Country Sedan
station wagon. Dad is out of his white shirt
and into his blue coveralls and cap.
He says I'll have to hold the light
because it's fall and dark after supper.
It's cold, my breath like the exhaust
from the tailpipe when he cranks the car.
The light is the one with the long yellow cord
that says, "Heavy Duty."
The bulb is caught in a trap,
a tin shield on one side
and a grid of bars on the other.
The bulb is like a bird in a cage,
the hawk I saw once at a roadside zoo
that had only seven animals.
"Hold the light so I can see," my father says.
The hawk had yellow and black eyes
and was motionless inside the cage.
On a branch, he was big at the top and small at the bottom
"Hold the light on what I'm doing."
and only his eyes moved, a flicker, but you could feel him,
you could almost hear a buzz like the tiny wire in the bulb.
The grid of the cage is all that's keeping the bulb
from unfolding its shining wings and springing off its perch.
"Here." My father grabs my hands and positions them
in the air above the engine. "Now don't move."
Both hands in the air clasp the neck of the light;
my arms ache. The hawk is heavy. He's eaten
an entire black snake. I can feel it in him, the thick
crawling muscles digesting.
"Please, please, hold the light. Hold it still."
My father's engine runs rougher.
He doesn't know how heavy the hawk is.
He only wants the light where he needs it.
But the light is burning in my arms now.
They throb with it. It's draining into me
and that's why he can't see.
My hands and forearms are warm because the light
is seeping into them. The yellow light of the hawk's eyes
inside my forearms is turning red,
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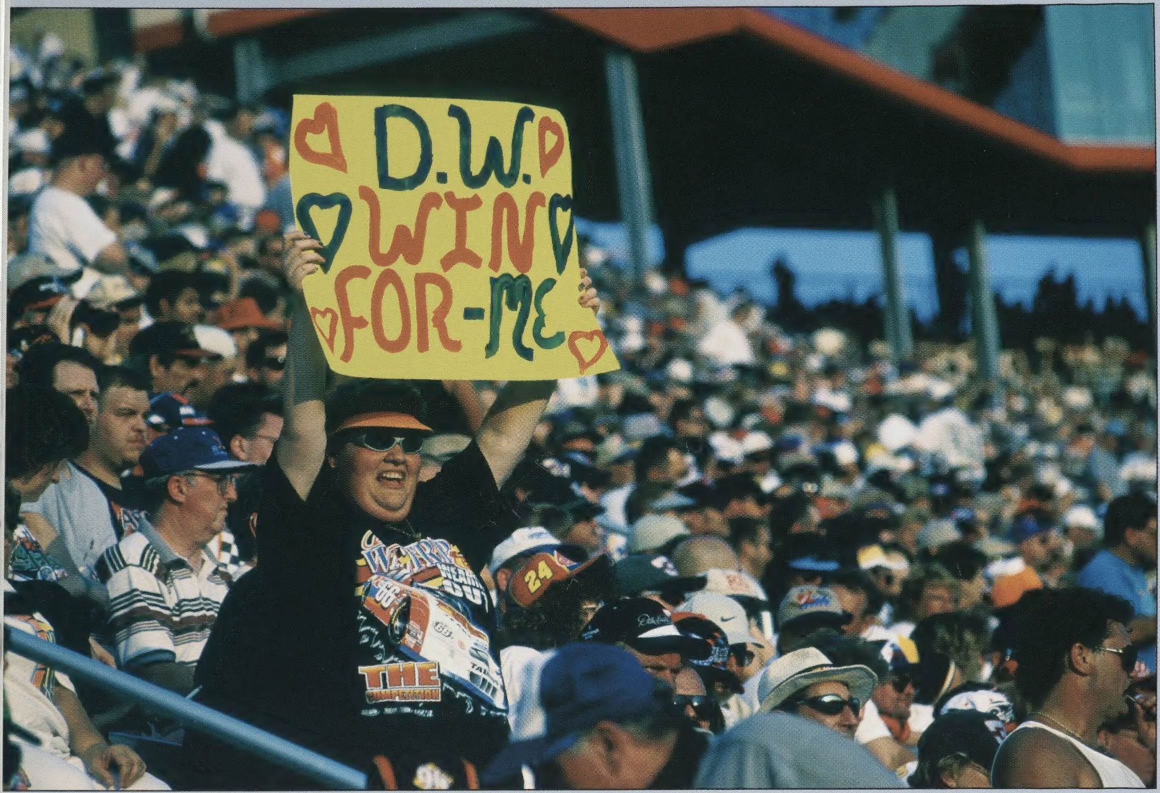

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WOMEN RACE FANS ON THE RISE

According to NASCAR's Brand Tracker in 2001, the crowd is now about 40 percent female. And there's no gender bias in fan-damonium. In this Car Racing in Appalachia issue of *Now & Then,* fans avid – such as this woman at Bristol Motor Speedway – and tepid share stories about their drivers, best-selling author Sharyn McCrumb among them. See her "How I Found MY Driver," page 26. Other demographics on NASCAR fans: 58 percent are between 18 and 44, 42 percent earn $50,000+ annually, 38 percent are from the South.

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